

**Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction in Dating Relationships**

by

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**A Thesis**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of**

**Master of Arts**

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### Abstract

The current studies were the first to examine perceived partner satisfaction in terms of how satisfied participants perceived their partners to be and how they contribute to their partners' satisfaction. Two studies examined correlations between own and perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and other factors involved in dating relationships such as passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness. Participants in Study 1 were 224 Introductory Psychology students involved in current dating relationships. The purpose of the study was to determine whether perceived partner satisfaction contributed to dating relationships (independent of own satisfaction) in terms of the relationship factors mentioned above. Study 2 compared 77 dating couples' responses to assess interdependence and similarity of partners ratings of satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and other relationship factors. Comparisons were also made between participants' perceptions of partner satisfaction and their partner's actual satisfaction.

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### Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction in Dating Relationships

If asked, most people would agree that satisfaction is extremely important in their relationships. If given the choice between a satisfying and dissatisfying relationship, people would surely select the initial option rather than the latter. The reasoning behind this obvious preference is that satisfaction symbolizes contentment, pleasure, and a long lasting relationship to most people and when imagining the perfect relationship, people would almost certainly view it as highly satisfying.

Researchers have discovered that satisfaction is positively related to important aspects of relationships such as happiness, trust, and commitment (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985; Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Spanier, 1976). Satisfaction has even been found to be a major determinant of whether a couple stays together or ends the relationship (Shackelford & Buss, 1997). Well-established measures of satisfaction such as Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976) and Hendrick's Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (1988) are frequently used to measure satisfaction and its relation to perceptions of the relationship and relationship duration. The current studies also measured relationship satisfaction in dating couples as well as the importance of that satisfaction to each partner in the relationship.

Typically, researchers have measured satisfaction by asking questions such as "How well does your partner meet your needs?" Although own satisfaction has been a well-researched aspect in close relationships, few researchers have asked participants to even consider their partner's satisfaction (not to mention its relation to their own satisfaction). Perceived partner satisfaction is defined as how satisfied individuals perceive their partners to be. It also includes how well individuals perceive that they meet

their partner's needs. Specifically, perceived partner satisfaction could be measured by asking "How well do you meet your partner's needs." Is partner satisfaction less important than own satisfaction in a relationship? The omission of perceived partner satisfaction in the majority of studies would indicate that it is not as critical to individuals as is their own satisfaction when evaluating their intimate relationships. This raises the question of whether a person can be satisfied without considering his or her partner's satisfaction or whether a person can be fulfilled in a relationship while his or her partner is not. This possibility seems unreasonable, especially if partner satisfaction is related to the same important relationship variables that own satisfaction is related to, namely, passion, intimacy, commitment, fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness. However, these correlations with perceived partner satisfaction have never been considered in previous research.

The main goal of the first study was to measure both own and perceived partner satisfaction. A measure of perceived partner satisfaction, adapted from Hendrick's RAS, was introduced in which participants had to consider their partner's satisfaction with the relationship. This study also took partner satisfaction one step further than past research has. Not only did participants consider partner satisfaction; they also rated its importance in the second scale devised for the study. This second scale measured importance of partner satisfaction by asking participants whether they were willing to make certain sacrifices to keep their partners satisfied and what they were willing to do if their partner was unsatisfied.

Two studies measured own and perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and the relationship between satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction, and other relationship factors previously mentioned.

These new scales paired with previously established scales give a more rounded view of both partners' satisfaction in the relationship, rather than just concentrating on one's own satisfaction. Study 1 was administered to individuals in dating relationships to test the reliability of the new scales. It also examined the relationships between own and perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and a number of relationship variables (happiness, trust, commitment, passion, intimacy, disclosure, and perceived fairness). Study 2 was administered to dating couples and again examined own and perceived partner satisfaction and other variables involved with close relationships. This second study also looked at the interdependence and similarity between partners' own levels of satisfaction and ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness with the relationship. It also compared perceptions of partner satisfaction and importance of partner's satisfaction to partner's actual satisfaction.

### Importance of Relationship Satisfaction

Research on intimate relationships has increased in recent years. One important question that is being asked is whether people are satisfied with their relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Hendrick, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990). Why is satisfaction considered to be such an important factor in relationships? It is important because high levels of satisfaction in intimate relationships are related to greater emotional stability and commitment in the relationship (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo,

1985; Shackelford & Buss, 1997), greater trust and willingness to invest in the relationship (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985), and a higher quality of interaction between partners (Brehm, 1992). Perhaps the most critical result of greater satisfaction is the likelihood of a longer lasting relationship (Shackelford & Buss, 1997).

### Satisfaction Definition

What exactly is relationship satisfaction? Simply put, satisfaction is the fulfillment of needs and desires in a relationship. Satisfaction may depend on different things for different people but can be generalized into a simple equation: Satisfaction = (rewards – costs) - comparison level (Brehm, 1992).

Rewards and costs. Rewards are anything that benefits the individual, ranging from material things (such as money), to resources (such as status or security), to positive emotions that result from being a part of the relationship. In contrast, costs are things such as time and effort put into the relationship. The following example illustrates how couples weigh their rewards and costs in relationships. Bob enjoys spending time with Mary because he finds her extremely beautiful to look at (reward) and they have many similar interests (reward), yet Bob has been unable to spend much time with his friends since he and Mary began dating (cost). Similarly, Mary finds Bob's sense of humor amusing (reward) and also likes the fact that they have so much in common (reward), however, she finds herself constantly having to pick up after Bob (cost). As shown in the example, different rewards and costs contribute to an individual's perception (or outcome) of relationship satisfaction.

Comparison level. Rewards and costs alone do not determine relationship satisfaction.

Comparison level is a standard against which outcomes (rewards – costs) are evaluated as

being acceptable or unacceptable. Comparison level (CL) is comprised of expectations that an individual brings into the relationship based on past experiences (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If a person had a number of positive past relationships, he or she would likely have high CL, meaning that the person believes that he or she deserves a very rewarding relationship. In contrast, if a person had negative past relationships, resulting in low CL, the person would likely believe that he or she only deserves less rewarding relationships.

For example, Bob may find his relationship with Mary to be quite costly, yet in comparison to Bob's past girlfriends, he believes Mary treats him better than any of the others did. In this case, Bob has a low comparison level (bad previous relationships) and as a result, he is quite satisfied with Mary even though the relationship may be costly to him. On the other hand, Mary may find her relationship with Bob to be very rewarding with low cost to her. If all of her past relationships were this way (high reward/ low cost), Mary likely has a very high CL, having grown accustomed to being treated well, and feels that she deserves only the best. Though Bob may be receiving fewer rewards and incurring more costs than Mary, his CL is lower than her CL and as a result, he may be more satisfied with the relationship than she. This is because Mary is harder to please (only expecting the best while Bob is willing to settle for what he can get).

To clarify Brehm's satisfaction equation, consider the following example. A person who feels very loved and safe in the relationship (high rewards), who puts little energy into the relationship (low costs), and who feels he or she doesn't deserve much (low CL), is likely to be very satisfied. In contrast, a person who benefits little from the

relationship after putting in tremendous effort and believing that they deserve the best is most likely dissatisfied with the relationship.

### Predictors of Satisfaction

Several factors have been found to predict satisfaction in close relationships. These predictors include components of love (commitment, passion, and intimacy), communication, and perceived fairness in the relationship. Generally, high levels of each of these factors are associated with high levels of relationship satisfaction.

Love. One important predictor of satisfaction is love. Sternberg's (1986) triangular model of love includes three components, namely intimacy, passion, and commitment. Intimacy is defined as the warmth a couple feels when they are close and is the bond or connected feeling that forms between them. Intimacy, often manifested as communication between partners, increases at the beginning of a relationship then eventually plateaus (Sternberg & Barnes, 1988). Passion refers to the drive and sexual attraction between partners. Passion grows rapidly at first, then levels off as habituation to the relationship occurs. Commitment consists of the decision a couple makes to stay together or as a person's wish or intent to continue the relationship (Barnes & Sternberg, 1997; Berscheid & Lopes, 1997). Commitment gradually increases throughout the relationship and in long-term relationships, may eventually level off (Sternberg & Barnes, 1988). Couples who experience strong passion paired with a strong friendship or intimacy are likely to be very satisfied with their relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997). Similarly couples who are satisfied are also more likely to be committed to the relationship (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997). Several researchers have found a strong relationship between satisfaction and commitment in a relationship (Sabatelli &

Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Sacher & Fine, 1996). The higher the level of satisfaction, the more likely individuals will be to stay in the relationship (Rusbult, 1983). On the other hand, individuals may be committed to the relationship for other reasons (e.g., religious beliefs) and thus convince themselves that they are satisfied with the relationship as a way of justifying staying in the relationship.

A pilot study conducted by Sande and Kobylak (1999) confirmed previous research findings. Specifically, couples who were highly committed to the relationship were also more satisfied than those couples who were less committed. The relationship between commitment and satisfaction was measured again in the current studies.

Communication. Another factor that predicts satisfaction is communication within the relationship. One specific component of communication is especially relevant to relationship satisfaction, namely self-disclosure. Self-disclosure refers to revealing personal information about oneself to another person and is a main component of intimacy in relationships. The information revealed may include sharing feelings or problems with the other person. According to Vera and Betz (1992), couples who are able to express themselves emotionally are likely to be in satisfying relationships.

Perceived fairness. A third factor that predicts satisfaction is perceived fairness in the relationship (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, & Larson, 1982). Perceived fairness is described as the extent to which partners see their relationship as being balanced in terms of reward level. For example, individuals who see themselves as receiving the same amount of benefits from the relationship as their partners are receiving would perceive their relationship as being balanced. Similarly, if individuals give the same amount as their partner gives, they will perceive the relationship as balanced. Perceived balance in a relationship leads to



greater satisfaction, while an unbalanced relationship (lack of equality) may be dissatisfying. The question of balance in a relationship is often discussed in terms of equity theory.

### Equity Theory and Satisfaction

Equity theory states that a person is most satisfied with a relationship when the ratio of relationship inputs to relationship outcomes is similar for both partners (Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1982; Brehm, 1992). Simply put, if both partners put similar effort into the relationship and receive similar outcomes, they have an equal relationship. However, equity does not always mean equality. For instance, if Partner A puts twice as much into the relationship than Partner B puts in, Partner A should receive twice as much from the relationship than Partner B receives. This ratio makes the relationship equitable though not necessarily equal. Yet equity in a relationship is largely what determines whether partners are satisfied.

Actual vs. perceived equity. Equity between partners can be measured by asking each partner what they have contributed (e.g., How many household chores have you done today? or When was the last time your partner made dinner for you?). Comparisons are then made between partners' responses to see if they have equity (measure both partners inputs and outputs). Actual equity, however, is not what determines whether an individual is satisfied with the relationship. Rather, it is perceived equity that truly matters. Specifically, whether the couple perceives their relationship to be equitable or not (rather than actual equity), largely determines whether they are satisfied with the relationship.

When calculating rewards and costs, it is often hard for people to be objective.

For instance, Mary may see doing the dishes as a great cost or contribution to the relationship, yet Bob may not have even noticed or see this chore as particularly costly in the relationship. Similarly, if Bob does something nice for Mary (Bob cost/ Mary reward), Mary may not see it as rewarding as Bob sees it. These scenarios point to the difficulty of measuring equity in relationships. This measurement difficulty was examined by Ross and Sicoly (1979) who refer to it as the egocentric bias.

Egocentric bias. Ross and Sicoly (1979) defined the egocentric bias as the tendency to overestimate our own contributions to the relationship. This overestimation is a result of people being more sensitive to their own relationship contributions than to their partner's relationship contributions (Brehm, 1992). As a result, both partners tend to overestimate what they contribute and underestimate what their partner contributes, resulting in both partners seeing themselves as unfairly treated.

Egocentric bias and relationship satisfaction. This bias can have large impact on one's relationship satisfaction (Thompson & Kelley, 1981). The relationship between the egocentric bias and satisfaction may occur in one of two ways. If satisfied, a person may evaluate his or her partner as contributing positively to the relationship. Similarly, if the person perceives his or her partner as greatly contributing to the relationship, he or she may become more satisfied with the relationship. For instance, if an individual gives less credit to his or her partner for solving conflicts or for carrying a conversation in the relationship, he or she tends to be dissatisfied with the relationship. Also, if dissatisfied, a person is less willing to admit to the other person's costs in the relationship. In contrast, if satisfied, a person is more willing to attribute more good things to his or her partner in

terms of positive contributions to the relationship than if he or she were dissatisfied (Thompson & Kelley, 1981).

There are two main consequences of perceived inequity in relationships: guilt and resentment (Schafer & Keith, 1980). Guilt occurs when individuals think they are getting more than they deserve. In contrast, resentment will occur when one's inputs are greater than his or her outcomes. In essence, resentment results when individuals feel they are getting the "short end of the stick".

There are different ways one might attempt to resolve these negative feelings. An individual may decrease his or her inputs (e.g., do fewer chores), or may demand more inputs from his or her partner. If these attempts fail, a final way to escape inequity is to leave the relationship.

As illustrated in the above discussion of equity theory, individuals do consider their partner's satisfaction in the relationship. Thus, in order to consider the equity of one's relationship, an individual must also consider his or her partner's rewards and costs in the relationship. It stands to reason that an equitable relationship is more desirable than an inequitable relationship, so partner satisfaction must be of some importance to individuals who desire an equitable relationship.

#### Other Factors relating to Relationship Satisfaction

Besides focussing on variables that predict own satisfaction, other important factors associated with relationship satisfaction need to be considered. Relationship satisfaction can affect or be affected by factors such as fairness, trust, and happiness with the relationship.

Happiness with relationship. Sande and Kobylak (1999) found general happiness with the relationship to correlate highly with relationship satisfaction. Happiness was measured using part of Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). Participants were asked to choose from a 7-point Likert scale the number that best describes the degree of happiness (all things considered) of their relationship. The scale ranges from 0 (extremely unhappy) through a midpoint of 3 (happy) to 6 (perfect). The current study again used this item, adopted from the DAS, as a measure of general happiness to examine the relationship between happiness and satisfaction for dating couples. As in the pilot study, the correlation between these two variables was expected to be highly significant.

Trust. One of the most important factors in a relationship is trust and it is hard to imagine a relationship functioning without it. Trust strengthens and builds security within close relationships. According to Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985), trust develops gradually as couples experience mutually satisfying interactions and increasing confidence in the relationship. A general measure of trust in the relationship was used in the current study by applying Rempel et al.'s Trust Scale (1985), which consists of three sub-scales: predictability, dependability, and faith.

In the pilot study, Sande and Kobylak (1999) found that trust correlated strongly with own relationship satisfaction for both men (.87) and women (.71). Specifically, couples who were satisfied were more trusting in the relationship. The reverse may also be true; couples who were able to trust each other were more satisfied in the relationship.

#### Own and Partner Satisfaction

Based on the above relationships with variables such as passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, and perceived fairness, we know that own satisfaction is very

important in evaluating one's relationship and in deciding whether or not to stay with one's partner. We now turn to the aspect of relationship satisfaction that has largely been ignored in previous research, namely partner satisfaction. As mentioned, perceived partner satisfaction refers to whether an individual perceives that he or she is meeting his or her partner's needs. The current studies examined whether perceived partner satisfaction is related to some of the relationship variables that own satisfaction is related to, and thus as important a consideration as own satisfaction is in evaluating one's relationship. These studies were also used to explore the relationship between own and perceived partner satisfaction and to determine whether individuals can be satisfied when their partners are not.

#### Measuring Perceived Partner Satisfaction

Although several researchers have examined relationship satisfaction, most have only asked individuals about their own perceptions of satisfaction. Sacher and Fine (1996) recognized the limitations of only assessing one partner in a dating couple. Unfortunately, they only acknowledged this omission by asking both partners about their own satisfaction, not about their partner's satisfaction. This illustrates the lack of consideration of partner satisfaction from the view of both partners in the relationship.

Tucker and Anders (1999) conducted the only study to date that has directly considered partner satisfaction within a relationship. They asked participants about own relationship satisfaction as part of a study on attachment style and perceived accuracy between partners. Participants were asked to first assess their own perceptions of satisfaction with the relationship, then to repeat the questions by answering how they thought their partners would complete the questions. One limitation of this study, as

acknowledged by the researchers, was that participants completed questionnaires based on how they thought their partners would complete them, they were not asked to consider how their partners felt or viewed the relationship in terms of their satisfaction (Tucker & Anders, 1999). Further, participants were not directly asked whether they thought their partners were satisfied or whether they themselves contributed to their partner's satisfaction. For example, participants were asked questions in the form of "Would your partner say that you meet his/her needs?" This type of questioning leaves participants guessing what their partners would say. Although this study comes the closest to measuring partner satisfaction as perceived by the other partner, it fails to directly ask participants "How well do you meet your partner's needs?" This direct type of questioning avoids participants guessing how someone else might answer, yet has them consider their own part in someone else's satisfaction. This type of questioning has never before been applied to relationship satisfaction research.

In a pilot study, Sande and Kobylak (1999) built on Hendrick's RAS by constructing a complementary scale that measures perceived partner satisfaction. This scale asks participants to focus on how their partners feel about or perceive the relationship, rather than simply how their partners would answer the questions. Questions are of the direct nature mentioned above and include the example "How satisfied do you think your partner is?" Also, this new measure of perceived partner satisfaction asks participants to consider their own role in their partner's satisfaction. Specifically participants are not only asked whether their own needs are being met but also to consider whether they are meeting their partner's needs ("How well do you think you meet your partner's needs?"). It is expected that perceived partner satisfaction will be

highly correlated with own satisfaction. Specifically, if individuals are highly satisfied with their relationships they will perceived their partner's satisfaction to be higher than they would if they themselves were dissatisfied. This tendency can be explained in two ways. Meeting our partners' needs makes us feel good and seeing that our partners are satisfied makes us satisfied. Thus, in a sense, partner satisfaction can cause own satisfaction. The reverse may also be true. Specifically, we may be very satisfied with the relationship and assume that our partners must feel the same way. It is hard to imagine that an individual could be highly satisfied while perceiving his or her partner to be dissatisfied.

#### Factors relating to Perceived Partner Satisfaction

Besides measuring perceptions of partner satisfaction in dating relationships, the associations of perceived partner satisfaction and other factors are also necessary to consider. The current studies examined the relationships between perceived partner satisfaction and other factors previously found to be correlated with own satisfaction, namely, passion, intimacy, commitment, self-disclosure, perceived fairness, happiness, and trust in the relationship.

Specifically, it was determined whether the level of perceived partner satisfaction was associated with perceptions of passion and intimacy in the relationship so that the more satisfied individuals perceived their partners to be, the more passionate and intimate those individuals would rate the relationship. It was also determined whether perceived partner satisfaction was associated with individuals' own commitment to the relationship.

The relationships between perceived partner satisfaction and self-disclosure, and perceived fairness were also examined to determine whether higher ratings of perceived

partner satisfaction were associated with a greater willingness to disclose and a fairer relationship perception than lower ratings of perceived partner satisfaction.

The relationship between happiness and perceived partner satisfaction was also examined in the current studies. Specifically, it was determined whether a person can be happy in the relationship knowing that his or her partner is dissatisfied. In the past, happiness was often considered to be a component of satisfaction, and not distinct from it. In our pilot study, males and females differed in the extent to which perceived partner satisfaction correlated with their own happiness. Specifically, for males, a significant positive relationship existed between own happiness and perceived partner satisfaction (.76). In contrast, the relationship between own happiness and perceived partner satisfaction was not significant for females (.27). These gender differences indicate that happiness is a distinctly separate variable from perceived partner satisfaction, which contradicts previous assumptions. Further, these pilot study findings suggest that own happiness is partly dependent on perceived partner satisfaction for males but not for females. Can females actually be happy knowing their partners are dissatisfied? Our pilot study suggests this is possible, yet our sample size was too small (24 couples) to make any certain conclusions. Gender differences in the relationship between happiness and perceived partner satisfaction were reexamined in the current studies.

A positive correlation was found between trust and own satisfaction in the pilot study conducted by Sande and Kobylak (1999). The same pattern between trust and perceived partner satisfaction was explored in the current studies. Specifically, it was determined if individuals were more trusting knowing that their partners were highly



satisfied with the relationship as compared to those individuals who knew that their partners were dissatisfied.

### Importance of Partner Satisfaction

Besides examining estimates of partner's satisfaction, it is valuable to know if partner's satisfaction is important to the participants. Generally speaking, people tend to feel positively when they themselves are satisfied with relationships. This has been the main focus of relationship satisfaction for researchers in the past. Yet, it stands to reason that there is value attached to knowing that we meet our partner's needs. Specifically, believing that one is a caring mate who takes responsibility for fulfilling his or her relationship obligations gives a person a sense of worthiness. This worthiness is similar to the feeling of being a good parent to one's children. Generally, parents reward their children because they know it will make their children happy. Recently researchers have explored this giving behavior in close relationships (Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Wichter, & Cox, 1997). These researchers examined partners' willingness to make sacrifices for each other, presumably for the good of the relationship. However, Van Lange et al. attributed these sacrifices to being motivated by the pursuit of long-term personal well being. They reasoned that a person might make a sacrifice for his or her partner with the expectation that the partner will reciprocate in the future. In this case, making sacrifices eventually leads to personal gains. According to this approach, what appeared to be a selfless act has in reality a selfish motivation. In contrast, the current studies focused on individuals rewarding their partners solely for the sake of the partner's satisfaction (without any personal gain). Specifically, these studies measured importance

of partner satisfaction rather than willingness to sacrifice for partner (with reciprocation expected).

Measuring importance of partner satisfaction. In a pilot study, importance of partner satisfaction was measured by using a scale that asked participants how much they cared whether or not their partner's needs were being met (Sande & Kobylak, 1999). Results showed an attenuated range towards high importance of partner satisfaction, such that almost all participants rated partner satisfaction as extremely important to them. These responses may be genuine or may be due in part to a social desirability response set. Specifically, participants may have wanted to appear in a positive manner and thus rated partner satisfaction as very important. The wording of the questions that measured importance of partner satisfaction may have been too obvious. For instance, "How much do you care about meeting your partner's needs" may make participants wary of answering in a negative manner, in order to avoid appearing cold or callous. After all, what kind of person would actually admit that they didn't care about their partner's satisfaction?

Reducing social desirability. One way to alleviate the social desirability dilemma surrounding importance of partner's satisfaction may be to use a forced choice response format. For instance, it is easy enough to say that one cares very much about keeping his or her partner satisfied, yet when one has to give up a personal reward to maintain the partner's satisfaction, his or her willingness to keep the partner happy may be altered. For example, a woman may state that meeting her partner's needs is one of her top priorities. However, what if meeting his needs requires her to give up some of her own free time in order to spend more time with him? Similarly, what if a man promises to do anything to

keep his partner happy, yet he must choose between career advancement and keeping the relationship satisfying for his partner? When people must consider putting their partner's rewards ahead of their own, they are likely to evaluate the importance of partner's satisfaction more carefully and honestly than if they were simply asked how much they care about partner satisfaction.

By including a forced choice scale that required participants to choose between partner's satisfaction and own personal rewards, we hoped to gain a more accurate measure of importance of partner satisfaction. Recall the satisfaction equation:  $(\text{reward} - \text{cost}) = \text{outcome}$ . Referring to the importance scale, if a person puts partner's satisfaction before his or her own rewards, the person gives up a reward and incurs a cost so his or her partner can gain a reward. Equity theory would predict that if a person takes less rewards for him or herself half of the time, each of the partners gains roughly equal rewards and they are likely to be more satisfied than couples where one partner gets all of the rewards (or gets no rewards). Recall equity theory where unequal amounts of rewards/costs in the relationship result in dissatisfaction (either guilt or resentment). For example, if Bob chooses to give up the career advancement (loses reward/incurs cost) to continue his relationship with Mary (reward), Bob must consider Mary's satisfaction as important to him. Yet, if Bob always rewards Mary instead of himself, the relationship is likely to be unsatisfying for him and he will likely experience resentment. Similarly, if Bob always rewards himself instead of Mary, she is likely to be dissatisfied and resentful (while Bob may experience guilt). In the importance of partner satisfaction scenario if both individuals choose to put partner's rewards first half of the time and own rewards first the other half of the time, they will likely be in the most satisfying relationship.

**Implications of Partner Satisfaction.** Should perceived partner satisfaction be found to correlate with own satisfaction, it could become as important as own satisfaction is in terms of predictive power and couples therapy. Concerning predictive power, we know that satisfaction is highly related to important variables such as passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, fairness, trust, and happiness. Thus, if a person is dissatisfied, they would probably rate the relationship as less passionate, intimate, fair, be less willing to disclose, less trusting, less committed and less happy compared to a person who is satisfied. By measuring the relationship between these variables and perceived partner satisfaction, the predictive power of partner satisfaction to estimate whether couples are passionate, intimate, committed, willing to disclose, trusting, and happy was also examined. Regarding the importance of partner satisfaction scale and the relationship variables, it was determined whether rewarding partners more and self less (for the sake of partner satisfaction) lead to greater passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, perceived fairness, trust, and happiness with the relationship.

In addition, strong correlations between perceived partner satisfaction and these variables could make partner satisfaction important in terms of couples therapy. For instance, having couples consider partner satisfaction may lead to realizations that are not possible when only focussing on own satisfaction.

### **Study 1**

#### **Overview and Hypotheses**

The RAS, the perceived partner satisfaction scale, the importance of partner satisfaction scale, and measures of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness were administered to 224 Introductory Psychology

students currently in dating relationships. The internal consistencies of the new partner satisfaction scales were assessed. Correlations between own and perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and other relationship variables, namely passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, trust, disclosure, and happiness were analyzed. Gender differences associated with each of the above variables were examined but no hypotheses were offered regarding these differences.

### Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

Hypothesis 1. As previously found by Sande and Kobylak (1999) a significant positive correlation was expected to exist between own and perceived partner satisfaction.

Specifically, the more satisfied a respondent was, the more satisfied they would perceive their partner to be.

### Predicting Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

The following hypotheses, 2 through 5, focus on predictors of own and perceived partner satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Based on findings by Sternberg (1986) it was predicted that significant positive correlations would exist between own satisfaction and passion, intimacy, and commitment. Specifically, the more satisfied a respondent was, the higher their ratings of passion, intimacy, and commitment to the relationship. It was also determined whether similar correlations occurred between perceived partner satisfaction and passion, intimacy, and commitment.

Hypothesis 3. It was predicted that perceived fairness would correlate positively with own satisfaction, as previously found by Cate et al. (1992). Individuals who are satisfied are more likely to perceive their relationship as fair than those individuals who are

dissatisfied. Similarly, the correlation between perceived fairness and perceived partner satisfaction was examined.

Hypothesis 4. It was expected that a significant positive correlation would exist between own satisfaction and willingness to disclose. Individuals who were more satisfied were expected to be more willing to disclose to their partners. It was also determined whether this relation existed between perceived partner satisfaction and disclosure.

Hypothesis 5. Based on past research findings (Sande & Kobylak, 1999), a strong positive correlation was expected between own satisfaction and trust in the relationship. If satisfied, participants would be more trusting than those who were less satisfied. The relationship between trust and perceived partner satisfaction was also examined to determine whether trust predicts perceived partner satisfaction to the same extent as it did own satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6. As predicted by Equity Theory (Lloyd, Cate, & Hemton, 1982), it was expected that those individuals who scored near the midpoint on the importance of partner satisfaction scale (rewarding both self and partner equally) would rate their satisfaction as higher than those individuals who scored very high (all rewards for partner) or very low (all rewards for self). It was also determined whether there was a positive correlation between importance of partner satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction. Specifically, whether or not participants who viewed partner satisfaction as very important also viewed their partner as very satisfied.

Hypothesis 7. Based on a previous pilot study (Sande & Kobylak, 1999) a strong positive correlation between own satisfaction and own happiness was expected. The more satisfied participants said they were, the happier they would be with the relationship. The

correlation between perceived partner satisfaction and happiness was also examined to determine whether or not participants' happiness depended on their perceptions of partner satisfaction to the same extent that it depended on their own satisfaction.

#### Predicting Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

After analyzing the above correlations, all of the relationship variables were placed into two separate regression analyses to see which factors best predicted own satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction and whether these predictors were the same or different for each type of satisfaction. These regressions were also conducted separately for men and women to check for any gender differences in predicting satisfaction.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants in Study 1 were 224 introductory psychology students (93 males and 131 females) who were currently in dating relationships for a minimum of three months and an average length of 17 months. (The longest relationship was 156 months or 13 years). Regarding ethnicity, participants included 164 whites, 34 non-whites, and 26 individuals who did not disclose their ethnic background. For their participation in this study, participants received partial credit toward their introductory psychology course.

#### Procedure

The relationship scales were distributed in a survey format to the students who remained anonymous. The study took participants roughly 30 minutes to complete. When they were finished the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed.

## Measures

Study 1 included measures of own and perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and measures of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, trust, disclosure, and happiness.

Own satisfaction. In order to measure own satisfaction with the relationship, participants completed Hendrick and Hendrick's (1988) 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The RAS has a reported alpha of .82 (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). It includes items such as "How well does your partner meet your needs?" and "How much do you love your partner?" Responses ranged from -3 (not well) to +3 (very well) with a midpoint of zero.

This measure of satisfaction was chosen because the RAS focuses on specific relational satisfaction rather than on global, long-term satisfaction. Considering our focus on a single measure of actual dating couples, specific measures were more appropriate than measures concerning a person's history of satisfaction. Also, we wanted to focus on satisfaction within a current dating relationship rather than on general satisfaction with one's life. In addition, the RAS is highly correlated with Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) which is a well established measure of relationship quality (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997), and has been used by several other researchers to assess satisfaction in intimate relationships (Vera & Betz, 1992; Siavelis & Lamke, 1992 ; Sacher & Fine, 1996).

Perceived partner satisfaction. Participants also completed Sande and Kobylak's (1999) Perceived Partner Satisfaction Scale (PPSS). Like the RAS, the PPSS also consists of seven items ranging from -3 to +3 with a midpoint of zero (Appendix A). Each item on



the PPSS parallels an item on the RAS. For instance, instead of asking if partners are meeting their needs and how much individuals love their partners, participants were asked “How well do you meet your partner’s needs?” and “How much does your partner love you?”

Importance of partner satisfaction. Participants also completed the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale (IPSS). This scale consists of nine forced choice items that required participants to choose between rewarding themselves or rewarding their partners (Appendix B). For instance, participants had to choose between buying something for themselves and buying something for their partner.

Social desirability. Paulhus’s (1984) 40-item Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding was administered and correlated with participants’ responses on the IPSS in order to ascertain the extent to which a social desirability response set might influence responses to this scale. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding is a 7-point Likert scale that ranges in response from 1 (not true) through 7 (very true) and has an internal consistency of .75 (Sande & Kobylak, 1999). An example of an item from this scale is “I always declare everything at customs.”

Commitment, passion, & intimacy. Sternberg’s (1997) Triangular Love Scale was used to measure participants’ commitment, passion, and intimacy in their relationships. The Triangular Love Scale is comprised of 36 items measured by a nine-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (not at all) through 9 (extremely) and has a reported internal consistency of .95 (Sternberg, 1997). Concerning commitment, or determination to stay in the relationship, participants responded to questions such as “I will always feel a strong responsibility for \_\_\_\_\_.” by imagining their partner’s name in the blank.

Passion is the drive or sexual attraction in a relationship. It was measured by questions such as “Just seeing \_\_\_\_\_ is exciting for me.” Intimacy is the bond or connected feeling between partners in a relationship. Intimacy was measured by questions such as “I have a warm and comfortable relationship with \_\_\_\_\_.”

Perceived fairness. Perceived fairness was measured using the Global Measures of Participant’s Inputs, Outcomes, and Equity/Inequity (Walster, Walster, & Traupmann, 1978). Participants were asked questions such as “All things considered, how would you describe your contributions to the relationship?” This 8-point Likert scale consists of four items and ranges in response from 1 (extremely negative) to 8 (extremely positive).

Trust. Participant’s trust in the relationship was measured using Rempel et al.’s (1985) Trust Scale, which includes 17 items measuring faith, predictability, and dependability in the relationship and has a reported internal consistency of .81. Responses ranged from -3 (strongly disagree) to +3 (strongly agree). A measure of faith is “When I am with my partner I feel secure in facing unknown new situations.” An example of predictability is “My partner behaves in a very consistent manner.” A dependability measure is “I have found that my partner is unusually dependable, especially when it comes to things which are important to me.” Together, faith, predictability, and dependability contribute to a person’s trust in the relationship.

Disclosure. Communication was measured in terms of self-disclosure, using the Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale (ESDS) (Snell, Miller, & Belk, 1988). The ESDS is a forty-item scale with a reported internal consistency of .83 (Snell, et al, 1988). It assesses how willing participants would be to discuss feelings of depression, happiness, anger, jealousy, anxiety, calmness, apathy, and fear with their partners. In order to keep the

current questionnaire at a reasonable length, the ESDS was shortened to eight items (one item per emotion) by selecting the first item from each set of emotions. For each item, participants rated how willing they were to discuss that topic with their partner on a five point Likert Scale with responses ranging from 1 (not at all willing to discuss) to 5 (totally willing to discuss).

Happiness. A measure of general happiness in the relationship was adapted from Spanier's 1976 Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Participants were asked "All things considered, how happy is your relationship?" They selected a number between 0 (extremely unhappy) and 6 (extremely happy) that best described their degree of happiness with the relationship.

## Results

Generally, participants in Study 1 rated both themselves and their partners as highly satisfied and high on measures of passion, intimacy, commitment, trust, and willingness to disclose. Most participants also tended to perceived the relationship as fair, rated partner satisfaction as very important, and rated themselves as very happy with the relationship. (See Table 1 for descriptive statistics). Gender differences were found for disclosure, intimacy, and trust (Table 2). That is, although both genders rated the relationship as moderately to highly intimate, women rated the relationship as more intimate than men did. Similarly, women were slightly more trusting and more willing to disclose than men were.

Internal consistency of the Perceived Partner Satisfaction Scale and the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale were assessed using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) (Cronbach, Gleser, Handa, & Rajaratnam, 1972). Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for the Perceived Partner

Satisfaction Scale was .84. Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale was .33.

### Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

Hypothesis 1. It was predicted that a significant positive correlation would exist between own and perceived partner satisfaction. A significant positive correlation between own satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction confirmed Hypothesis 1 ( $r = .75, p < .001$ ). The more satisfied both men and women rated themselves, the more satisfied they also rated their partner ( $r = .84$  and  $.70$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ).

### Predictors of Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

After determining the relationship between own and perceived partner satisfaction, the correlations between these two types of satisfaction and other predictors were examined. Specifically, the relationships between own and perceived partner satisfaction and passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, trust, importance of partner satisfaction and happiness were examined. These correlations are presented below. It is important to note that because such a strong relationship was found between own and perceived partner satisfaction, both bivariate and partial correlations (controlling for the other type of satisfaction) are reported. This allowed for exploration of the independent relationships between one type of satisfaction and the predictors without the influence of the other type of satisfaction. First, bivariate correlations between own satisfaction and the specific predictor are reported. Next, partial correlations (controlling for perceived partner satisfaction) for own satisfaction and the predictor are reported. Lastly, any gender differences that exist in either bivariate or partial correlations are then presented. Correlations for perceived partner satisfaction and each specific predictor are

described in the same fashion (bivariate correlations, then partial correlations controlling for own satisfaction, then any existing gender differences).

Hypothesis 2. It was predicted that significant positive relationships would exist between own satisfaction and passion, intimacy, and commitment. Significant bivariate correlations between own satisfaction and passion, intimacy, and commitment confirmed Hypothesis 2 (see Table 3 for partial and bivariate correlations). Thus, the more satisfied participants were, the more passionate, intimate, and committed they rated the relationship. However, when perceived partner satisfaction and the other two predictors were partialled out, the only partial correlation that remained significant was between own satisfaction and passion (Table 3). No gender differences were found for either bivariate or partial correlations with own satisfaction. That is, for both women ( $r = .76$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and men ( $r = .78$ ,  $p < .001$ ), passion was significant correlated with satisfaction.

Significant positive bivariate correlations were also found between perceived partner satisfaction and passion, intimacy, and commitment. When partial correlations were computed (with own satisfaction and the other two predictors partialled out) the pattern of results changed (see Table 3). Specifically, the relationship between perceived partner satisfaction and intimacy was the only correlation that remained significantly positive. The relationship between commitment and perceived partner satisfaction became non-significant and the relationship between passion and perceived partner satisfaction actually became significantly negative. Further, separate analyses for men and women revealed that the partial correlation between intimacy and perceived partner satisfaction was significant for women ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but not for men ( $r = -.07$ , ns), and the difference between these correlations was significant,  $z = 2.34$ ,  $p < .05$ . The negative

correlation between passion and perceived partner satisfaction was significant for women ( $r = -.20, p < .05$ ) but not for men ( $r = -.11, ns$ ), yet the difference between these correlations was not significant,  $z = -.066, ns$ . No gender differences were found for the bivariate or partial correlations between perceived partner satisfaction and commitment.

Hypothesis 3. The computation of perceived fairness involves the comparison of two components. The first component is own outcomes (the ratio of own rewards and own costs). The second component is partner's outcomes (the ratio of partner's rewards and partner's costs). According to Equity Theory, a relationship is perceived to be fair when own outcomes equal partner's outcomes (or own outcomes – partner's outcomes = zero). Self is said to be over-benefited if own outcomes is greater than partner's outcomes (or own outcomes – partner's outcomes = a value greater than zero). Self is said to be under-benefited if own outcomes is less than partner's outcomes (or own outcomes – partner's outcomes = a value less than zero). Thus, in the current analysis, perceived fairness is own outcomes minus partner's outcomes. In the strictest sense, any departure from perceived fairness equaling zero represents a perception of unfairness. So fairness is really a perception that the absolute value of perceived fairness is near or at zero.

When the absolute value of perceived fairness was computed, it was negatively correlated with own satisfaction ( $r = -.27, p < .001$ ), confirming the Equity Theory prediction that any departure from equality between own outcomes and partner's outcomes (in either direction) is associated with decreased satisfaction. This correlation was significantly negative for both men and women ( $r = -.20$  and  $-.31$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ).

In addition to the above analyses, separate correlations were computed with each of the two components of fairness, own outcomes and partner's outcomes. The correlation between own satisfaction and own outcomes was ( $r = .26, p < .001$ ). However, when separate correlations were computed for women and men, the correlation between own satisfaction and own outcomes was significantly positive for women ( $r = .40, p < .001$ ) but not for men ( $r = .09, ns$ ), and the difference between these correlations was also significant,  $z = 2.42, p < .05$ . The correlation between own satisfaction and partner's outcomes was not significant ( $r = -.03, ns$ ), for both women ( $r = -.12, ns$ ) and men ( $r = .13, ns$ ), and the difference between these correlations was also not significant,  $z = -.07, ns$ . To summarize the correlations involved in satisfaction and perceived fairness, women and men reported less satisfaction as fairness decreased (the negative correlation between own satisfaction and the absolute value of perceived fairness). Women, but not men, reported more satisfaction as own outcomes increased (the more personally rewarding and less personally costly their relationship, the greater their satisfaction). Neither men's nor women's own satisfaction was correlated with partner's outcomes.

The bivariate correlation between perceived fairness and perceived partner satisfaction was non-significant ( $r = .06, ns$ ) and remained non-significant when own satisfaction was controlled in the partial correlation ( $r = -.12, ns$ ). No gender differences were found for either of the correlations. When own and partner's outcomes were examined separately, bivariate correlations for both outcomes with perceived partner satisfaction were non-significant. The partial correlation for own outcomes with perceived partner satisfaction was significantly negative for women ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ) but

not for men ( $r = .02$ , ns), indicating that the more outcomes women perceived themselves to be getting, the less satisfied they perceived their partner to be. The difference between men's and women's correlations was not significant,  $z = -1.69$ , ns. No other significant correlations or gender differences were found.

Hypothesis 4. It was predicted that own satisfaction and willingness to disclose would be significantly correlated. This hypothesis was confirmed by a significant positive bivariate correlation between own satisfaction and willingness to disclose ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The partial correlation remained significant when perceived partner satisfaction was partialled out, though it decreased somewhat ( $r = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A significant gender difference was found between men's and women's willingness to disclose (Table 2). Further, men's satisfaction correlated more highly with disclosure ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than did women's satisfaction ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but this difference between correlations was not significant,  $z = -1.7$ , ns.

A significant positive bivariate correlation was found between perceived partner satisfaction and disclosure ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but this correlation disappeared for both genders when own satisfaction was partialled out ( $r = .05$ , ns).

Hypothesis 5. Trust was expected to correlate positively with own satisfaction. Indeed, a positive bivariate correlation was found between trust and own satisfaction ( $r = .67$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The partial correlation between trust and satisfaction remained significant ( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A significant gender difference was found between women's and men's trust in the relationship (Table 2), but no gender difference was found for the bivariate or partial correlations between trust and own satisfaction.



The bivariate correlation between perceived partner satisfaction and trust was significant ( $r = .58, p < .001$ ), as was the partial correlation when own satisfaction as controlled for ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ). However, this partial correlation was significant for women ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ) but not for men ( $r = -.08, ns$ ), and this difference between correlations was significant,  $z = 2.62, p < .05$ . Thus, women's perceptions of partner satisfaction were related to their trust in the relationship while men's perceptions of partner satisfaction were not related to their trust.

Hypothesis 6. It was predicted that those participants who scored near a midpoint on The importance of partner satisfaction scale (rewarding self and partner equally) would have higher levels of satisfaction compared to those participants who scored higher (rewarding partner only) or lower (rewarding self only) on the scale. These results did not turn out as expected. Instead results were positively skewed in that almost no scores occurred below the midpoint and the majority of scores fell in the upper third of the scale. This indicates that most participants chose to reward their partner almost all of the time. Also, the relationship between own satisfaction and importance of partner satisfaction was linear. It was found that the more satisfied participants were, the more likely they were to say that they would reward their partners. Thus, as own satisfaction increased, so did participants' scores on the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale (see Table 4).

The correlation between social desirability and importance of partner satisfaction was non-significant ( $r = .13, ns$ ) which indicates that participants did not respond to items on the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale merely to look good.

A significant positive bivariate correlation was found between importance of partner satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction ( $r = .16, p < .05$ ) yet when own satisfaction was controlled for, this correlation became non-significant ( $r = -.11, ns$ ). Thus, how important individuals rated their partner's satisfaction was not associated with how satisfied they perceived their partner to be. This was the case for both genders.

Hypothesis 7. A significant positive bivariate correlation between own satisfaction and happiness was expected and was confirmed. Participants who rated themselves as highly satisfied also rated themselves as very happy with the relationship ( $r = .71, p < .001$ ). The partial correlation between own satisfaction and happiness remained significant ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ). No gender differences were found for either of the bivariate or partial correlations.

Both bivariate and partial correlations between perceived partner satisfaction and happiness were significant and positive ( $r = .59$  and  $.16$  respectively,  $p < .05$ ). Again, no gender differences were found.

#### Predicting Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction

Stepwise regression analyses were used to examine the predictors of own and perceived partner satisfaction. Significant predictors of own satisfaction for both genders together were passion, perceived partner satisfaction, own outcomes, happiness, and trust (see Table 5). Interestingly, separate regressions for men and women revealed that passion was the best predictor of own satisfaction for women ( $\beta = .79$ ),  $t(99) = 12.33$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas perceived partner satisfaction was the best predictor of own satisfaction for men ( $\beta = .87$ ),  $t(75) = 15.22$ ,  $p < .001$ . Own satisfaction was the best predictor of perceived partner satisfaction for both genders together (Table 6). When separate

regressions were computed for men and women, own satisfaction, trust, and own outcomes predicted perceived partner satisfaction for women while only own satisfaction predicted perceived partner satisfaction for men (Table 7).

### Discussion

In general couples who participated in Study 1 were involved in very satisfying relationships. They were very trusting, intimate, committed, and happy in their relationships. These positive perceptions are to be expected given that the relationships were for the most part, fairly new. With an average of less than one and a half years in length, most couples in Study 1 may still have been in the “honeymoon phase” of the relationship. This also helps to account for the high ratings of passion reported by participants, as levels of passion tend to be highest early in the relationship (Sternberg, 1986). Another possible explanation for such positive ratings of relationships is self-selection. That is, it is possible that only individuals who felt they were in highly satisfying relationships (with few problems) chose to participate in this study. It is possible that those individuals who felt they were unhappy in their relationships decided not to participate because they did not want to think about how unsatisfied they currently were. It stands to reason that individuals prefer to think about and discuss positive aspects of their lives, while ignoring or distracting themselves from the negative aspects. This could be why few, if any, of the participants in Study 1 rated the relationship as negative in any way.

The main purpose of Study 1 was to introduce perceived partner satisfaction into relationship research by examining its relations with several variables in order to determine whether it was important in addition to own satisfaction to individuals. This

goal was accomplished in that several interesting relations were found between perceived partner satisfaction and other relationship factors.

Concerning the relationship between own and perceived partner satisfaction, Study 1 revealed that participants tended to rate their partner as highly satisfied if they themselves were highly satisfied. Further, multiple regression analyses revealed that perceived partner satisfaction was a significant predictor of own satisfaction.

There are at least three possible explanations for these satisfaction findings. First, own satisfaction may cause perceived partner satisfaction. Specifically, it is possible that participants based their estimates of partner satisfaction on their own level of satisfaction, or essentially “projected” their own satisfaction onto their partners. It makes sense that individuals who see themselves as very content with the relationship would also want to assume that their partner is just as satisfied as they are, rather than face the possibility that they could be satisfied while knowing that their partner is less than satisfied. Thus, in order to feel good about the relationship, individuals may be motivated to believe their partner has a level of satisfaction similar to their own. A second explanation for this satisfaction projection could be the idea of self-expansion. Specifically, individuals in close relationships tend to see the other person as an extension of themselves (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). So based on self-expansion, if individuals rate themselves as highly satisfied, they will also rate their partner as highly satisfied because they see their partner’s perceptions and feelings as an extension of their own. A third explanation for this satisfaction projection could be due to the information provided by one’s partner. Based on the reciprocal nature of relationships, it makes sense that when individuals disclose a certain level of satisfaction to their partner, their partner will reciprocate with a

similar response. For instance, a compliment paid to one's partner is usually responded to with something positive in return. If Partner A discloses how content he is, Partner B may be more likely to agree by saying something positive about the relationship than she is to say how dissatisfied she is. Thus, individuals may base their perceptions of partner satisfaction on this reciprocal disclosure and believe that their partner's satisfaction level is similar to their own.

So whether the underlying reason for satisfaction projection is motivational (wanting to believe one's partner is satisfied) or informational (one's partner communicates similar satisfaction levels), participants' own satisfaction may cause perceived partner satisfaction. If this projection explanation is correct and perceived partner satisfaction is merely an extension of own satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction might only correlate with other variables because it is correlated with own satisfaction. (That is, the correlations between perceived partner satisfaction and other relationship factors should be spurious). One way to examine this issue is to see if perceived partner satisfaction is related to these other variables independently of any relationship to own satisfaction. This can be accomplished by computing the correlations between perceived partner satisfaction and those variables, while partialling out the effect of own satisfaction. These computations were examined in Study 1 and they provide some support for the projection of satisfaction explanation. For instance, when perceived partner satisfaction was controlled for, own satisfaction remained significantly correlated with passion, perceived fairness, disclosure, importance of partner satisfaction, trust, and happiness. In contrast, when own satisfaction was controlled for, perceived partner

satisfaction had no independent connection to passion, perceived fairness, disclosure, or importance of partner satisfaction.

However, there is also support for an alternate explanation for the relation between own satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction, namely perceived partner satisfaction may be a determinant of own satisfaction. In an altruistic sense, the belief that one is meeting one's partner's needs may be inherently satisfying in the same way that believing oneself is a good parent is satisfying. It stands to reason that some individuals can only be satisfied if they think that their partner is satisfied. On the other hand, having a dissatisfied partner can make an individual very miserable in the relationship. If individuals perceive their partner to be unfulfilled and dissatisfied with the relationship, this perception may actually cause them to also feel dissatisfied. For example, being with a partner who constantly complains about how miserable he or she is would make it very difficult for an individual to feel good about that relationship (unless the individual is completely unobservant).

So is anything to be gained by measuring perceived partner satisfaction? That is, did perceived partner satisfaction make any independent contributions to the current relationship research or it is simply a component of, or projection of, own satisfaction? This question was addressed by computing independent correlations (with own satisfaction controlled for) between perceived partner satisfaction and other factors involved in relationships to see whether perceived partner satisfaction is different from own satisfaction. Support for perceived partner satisfaction being different from own satisfaction comes from the findings that the correlations between own satisfaction and factors such as passion, trust, and happiness became non-significant when perceived

partner satisfaction was controlled for. Further, perceived partner satisfaction seems especially important when intimacy and commitment to the relationship are considered. When perceived partner satisfaction was controlled for, the relationship between own satisfaction and intimacy became non-significant, but when own satisfaction was controlled for, the relationship between perceived partner satisfaction and intimacy remained significantly positive. This indicates that when rating the level of intimacy in the relationship, individuals take perceived partner satisfaction into account as much as (or more so) than own satisfaction. Thus, perceived of partner satisfaction may contribute to one's assessment of intimacy in the relationship. Or, intimacy in the relationship may be responsible for how satisfied individuals perceive their partners to be. A third explanation is that some other relationship factor such as length of time together, may cause both intimacy ratings and perceptions of partner satisfaction. Commitment to the relationship seems to depend on both own and perceived partner satisfaction because when either was factored out, the relationship between the other type of satisfaction and commitment became non-significant. Further, the positive partial correlation found between happiness and perceived partner satisfaction indicates that participants' happiness partly depends on how satisfied they perceive their partners to be. Interestingly, while own satisfaction was highly correlated with perceived partner satisfaction, it was not significantly correlated with partner's outcomes in the relationship. While these findings may appear to contradict each other, there is a possible explanation for them. Specifically, perceived partner satisfaction, like own satisfaction is made up of: (partner's rewards minus partner's costs) minus partner's comparison level. Thus, own satisfaction depends not only on partner's rewards and costs (which equal

partner's outcomes) but is also connected to partner's comparison level in the relationship. If individuals believe their partner has low outcomes but also has a low comparison level, they would perceive their partner to be quite satisfied, which is associated with increases in their own satisfaction levels.

Thus, it is important to note that whether individuals base their perceptions of partner satisfaction on their own level of satisfaction, or whether perceived partner satisfaction determines own satisfaction, (or whether a third factor causes both own and perceived partner satisfaction), both partners' satisfaction levels need to be considered in relationship research. The current study illustrates that perceived partner satisfaction is related to, yet different from, own satisfaction. It also shows how important perceived partner satisfaction is when considering own satisfaction and other relationship factors such as intimacy, commitment, trust, and even one's own happiness with the relationship.

After determining that perceived partner satisfaction does matter in relationship research, the next major focus of the study concerned importance of partner satisfaction. All participants rated partner satisfaction as very important, with only three participants choosing to reward their partner as little as only a third of the time. A non-significant correlation between importance of partner satisfaction and Paulus's Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding ( $r = .13$ , ns) suggests that social desirable responding was not responsible for such high levels of importance of partner satisfaction. The "honeymoon phase" explanation could possibly shed some light on why participants were so concerned with their partners' satisfaction. Specifically, these individuals are still dating and trying to impress each other. Also, they have few conflicting responsibilities (e.g. work, children, mortgages, etc.) to get in the way of pleasing their partners. Perhaps



married couples who have already 'won over' their partners, and whom have several other competing obligations, would vary to a greater extent on levels of importance of partner satisfaction.

Unfortunately, the IPS scale had poor internal consistency (.35). Further, the inter-item correlations were also poor overall (ranging from  $r = -.01$  to  $.18$ ). Also, the majority of participants rated importance of partner satisfaction as very high, indicating that they chose to reward their partners most of the time. These findings suggest that although differences within participants were small (that is the majority mostly chose to reward their partners), the differences between participants were large enough to make the internal consistency of the scale poor. Specifically, though each individual participant chose to reward their partner on most items, the items they chose to reward their partner on differed between participants. Thus, participants did not agree on which items they would reward their partner on and which items they would reward themselves on. The internal consistency of the IPS scale will be re-analyzed in Study 2.

A linear relationship was found between own satisfaction and importance of partner satisfaction where the more satisfied individuals were, the more important they rated partner satisfaction. There are a few possible explanations for this finding. First, being highly satisfied with the relationship may cause individuals to feel somewhat inclined to do nice things for their partners. For instance, being satisfied with the relationship, Partner A may feel that he wants or needs to give something back to Partner B (in order to balance things out or prevent guilty feelings) and thus will reward her when the opportunity arises. Similarly, individuals who are discontent are less willing to benefit their partner than those individuals who are satisfied. Specifically, dissatisfied individuals

may think, "Why should I do anything nice for my partner when I'm not getting anything good out of this relationship?" Another possibility for why satisfied individuals are more willing to reward their partners is that they simply want their partners to share in their enjoyment of the relationship. Specifically, Partner A may be so thrilled with the relationship that she will do whatever it takes to get Partner B to feel the same way.

It is also possible that higher ratings of importance of partner satisfaction caused participants to feel more satisfied. For instance, choosing to reward their partners may lead individuals to experience the satisfaction of doing something nice for another person (similar to the good feeling that one gets when doing volunteer work). It makes sense that doing nice things for a loved one would make individuals feel good about themselves and about the relationship with their partner. Or, it is possible that own satisfaction increases after individuals reward their partners because they need to justify choosing to benefit their partner instead of themselves. If individuals are dissatisfied yet reward their partner, they would have a difficult time justifying why they did so. Reasoning that "I rewarded my partner because I am in a very satisfying relationship," would make more sense to individuals than "I rewarded my partner but I am not in a satisfying relationship."

Several interesting gender differences were found in Study 1. A stereotypic view that men lack expressiveness and are unwilling (or unable) to share their feelings with their partners is currently a popular belief in society. Support for this belief comes from the finding that women are generally more self-disclosing than men (Derlega, Durham, Gockel, & Sholis, 1981). Study 1 was used to examine this gender difference more closely in order to determine when it was true and when it wasn't. Differences between means indicated that female participants were significantly more willing to disclose

feelings to their partner than male participants. Further, a non-significant correlation between own satisfaction and disclosure indicated that women were willing to disclose regardless of their own level of satisfaction. However, the current study revealed a significant correlation between own satisfaction and disclosure for male participants, suggesting that men were quite willing to disclose, provided that they were highly satisfied with the relationship. So women were willing to disclose whether they were satisfied or not while men were only willing to disclose if they were satisfied.

Alternatively, willingness to disclose was associated with an increase in men's own satisfaction. Further, men's own satisfaction may depend, in part, on their willingness to disclose in the relationship but women's willingness to disclose is not associated with their own satisfaction.

A gender difference in means revealed that women were slightly more trusting than men were and rated the relationship as more intimate than men did. There are three possible explanations for these gender differences. First, the women in this study may have been more trusting and rated the relationship as more intimate as a function of their traditional gender roles. From early on in life, women are encouraged to be the nurturing and caring partner in the relationship. Thus, perhaps these women were more trusting and intimate as a result of the societal expectations placed on them. Or, the men in these relationships may have been more trustworthy than their female partners. This would explain why the female partners were more trusting of their male partners than the men were of their female partners. Similarly, the men in this study may have contributed to the intimacy in the relationship more so than their female partners did, so that their female partners would have rated the relationship as more intimate than the men did.

While these two explanations are certainly possible, it makes sense that a third variable may have influenced these gender differences in trust and intimacy. For instance, one gender may have been more trusting and rated the relationship as more intimate than the other gender as a function of their relationship orientation. Specifically, being communally oriented towards a relationship means that individuals provide for their partner without concern for immediate reciprocation (Mills & Clark, 1994). Perhaps the women in this study were more communally oriented than the men were, resulting in greater trust and higher ratings of intimacy. In contrast, the men may have been hesitant in their trust and intimacy ratings as a function of being less communally-oriented.

Although women in Study 1 were more trusting and rated the relationship as more intimate than men did, men also cared a great deal about their relationships. Support for this statement comes from the fact that the best predictor of own satisfaction for men was perceived partner satisfaction. For women, it was passion, not perceived partner satisfaction that best predicted own satisfaction. In addition, perceived partner satisfaction was positively correlated with men's own happiness, indicating that when they are contemplating their own happiness, men consider their partner's satisfaction to be an important factor. Thus, the men in Study 1 felt partner's contentment greatly contributed to their own satisfaction and happiness in the relationship. These findings contradict the stereotypic belief that partner satisfaction is less important to men than to women (in terms of personal fulfillment). Instead, when rating their own fulfillment in the relationship, men appear to be influenced by their partner's satisfaction as much as women are. Further, knowing that their partner is dissatisfied is negatively associated

with men's satisfaction and happiness to the same extent that it is associated with women's satisfaction and happiness.

Generally, Study 1 confirmed Hypothesis 1 through 7 in that own satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction were strongly correlated and that own satisfaction was strongly correlated with relationship predictors such as passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness. Further, this study provided some interesting answers to exploratory questions regarding perceiver partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and gender differences in dating relationships. In Study 2 the relationship between own and perceived partner satisfaction was taken a step further by examining how accurate participants were in their perceptions of partner satisfaction. Also, Study 1 showed a linear relationship between own satisfaction and importance of partner satisfaction. The next study was used to examine whether participants' ratings of importance of partner satisfaction correlated with how satisfied their partner actually was. Study 1 also revealed gender differences among ratings of several relationship factors. Study 2 was used to explore whether partners differed in their ratings of these relationship factors.

## Study 2

### Overview and Hypotheses

Participants in Study 2 were dating couples. Both partners completed questionnaires containing the RAS, perceived partner satisfaction scale, importance of partner satisfaction scale, and measures of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness. The main purpose of Study 2 was to examine the following questions: First, is it likely that one partner would be satisfied if the other

partner is not? Specifically, are the satisfaction ratings of partners in a relationship correlated? Gender differences were also explored to see if one gender is more satisfied than the other. Secondly, do people really know how satisfied their partner is? The correlation between perceived partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction was computed. Additional analyses were done to see whether participants overestimated or underestimated their partner's satisfaction. Third, if partners' satisfaction is very important to individuals, are their partners more likely to be satisfied than if it is unimportant? The correlation between importance of partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction was examined. Then comparisons were made between partners' mean ratings of importance of partner satisfaction to see if one partner viewed partner satisfaction as more important than the other partner did. Finally, are partners similar in their perceptions of other relationship factors? Partners' responses were compared in terms of their ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness.

Two main issues will be focused on for each of the above questions: interdependence of partners' responses and similarity of partners' responses. Interdependence was assessed by correlations between partners' responses. Similarity was assessed by examining mean differences between partners' responses. Both correlations and mean differences were computed for own satisfaction, perceptions of partner's satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and both partners' ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness.

### Own Satisfaction

#### Are partners' ratings of satisfaction interdependent?

Hypothesis 1a: It was expected that a positive correlation would exist between partners' own satisfaction. As one partner's own satisfaction increased, the other partners' own satisfaction would also increase.

#### Are partners' ratings of satisfaction similar?

Hypothesis 1b: It was predicted that partners would have similar ratings of satisfaction such that the difference between ratings would be minimal. Gender differences were also examined to determine whether one gender was more satisfied than the other.

### Perceived Partner Satisfaction and Partner's Actual Satisfaction

#### Are individuals' estimates of partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction interdependent?

Hypothesis 2a: Based on the reasoning that participants should know their partners fairly well, a positive correlation was expected between perceived partner satisfaction and partner's own satisfaction.

#### Do individuals really know how satisfied their partners are?

Hypothesis 2b: Participants were expected to be fairly accurate in their estimates of partner satisfaction. However, the mean difference between perceived partner satisfaction and partner's own satisfaction were compared to see whether participants tended to systematically overestimate or underestimate their partner's satisfaction. It was also determined whether any gender differences existed in estimation patterns and if one gender was more accurate in their estimations than the other.

**Importance of Partner Satisfaction and Partner's Own Satisfaction**

**If partners' satisfaction is very important to individuals, are their partners more likely to be satisfied than if it was unimportant?**

**Hypothesis 3a:** Based on the idea that individuals who consider partner satisfaction to be very important should have highly satisfied partners, it was predicted that a positive correlation would exist between importance of partner satisfaction and partner's own satisfaction. The more important partner satisfaction was for an individual, the more satisfied his or her partner was expected to be. It was also determined whether couples' perceptions of importance of partner satisfaction were interdependent by computing the correlation between both partners' ratings of importance of partner satisfaction.

**Do couples place similar amounts of importance on partner satisfaction?**

**Hypothesis 3b:** Partners' were predicted to have similar views of importance of partner satisfaction. Mean differences of importance of partner satisfaction were computed to see if couples shared similar perspectives regarding their partner's satisfaction.

**Comparisons of Other Relationship Variables**

**Are partners' perceptions of other relationship factors interdependent?**

**Hypothesis 4a:** It was expected that positive correlations would exist between partners' ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness.

**Do partners share similar perceptions of other relationship factors?**

**Hypothesis 4b:** It was predicted that couples would share similar views of their relationship so that mean differences between partners' ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, perceived fairness, trust, and happiness would be minimal.



## Method

### Participants

Participants in this study were 79 dating couples. They were required to be in an exclusive dating relationship for a minimum of three months. As a check, participants were asked to write what they did on their first date together in order to ensure that they were really a couple (and not just pretending to be a couple so they could get experimental credits). After each laboratory session was complete, the experimenter compared couples' first date stories to assess whether they matched. After completing the study, two couples were dropped from the data set due to suspicious responses (conflicting first date stories), leaving 77 couples. Participants ranged from 17 to 39 years of age, with an average age of 20. As in Study 1, participants were recruited from Introductory Psychology classes. Either both partners were students in the psychology class or one student brought his or her partner from outside the class. All participants in Introductory Psychology received partial credit towards their course for participation in the study.

### Procedure

Participants were brought to the laboratory approximately five couples at a time. Men and women completed the surveys in separate rooms and responses were kept confidential from partners to reduce pressure to answer in a desirable manner. All responses remained anonymous in that participants did not put any identifying information on the questionnaire. When the surveys were completed, participants were thanked by the experimenter and encouraged not to discuss their responses with their

partners. When the study was completed, participants were debriefed as to the nature of the experiment.

### Measures

Measures of own satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, passion, intimacy, commitment, perceived fairness, disclosure, trust, and happiness were the same as those in Study 1.

### Results

Couples were in relationships for an average of 23 months, with a range of three months being the shortest and 300 months being the longest. Study 2 tested Hypotheses 1 through 4. This study focused on actual dating couples and both partners completed the survey, which allowed for comparing and evaluating both partners' responses.

Consistent with Study 1, participants in this study also tended to be highly satisfied, happy, trusting, committed to the relationship, and rated their partners as highly satisfied (Table 8).

#### Are partners' ratings of satisfaction interdependent?

Hypothesis 1a: It was predicted that a positive correlation would exist between both partners' ratings of own satisfaction. This hypothesis was confirmed by a significant positive correlation ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) between own satisfaction for both partners. Also, average ratings of satisfaction were similar for both genders ( $M = 13.78$  for women and  $M = 13.55$  for men), a non-significant difference of .23,  $t(76) = -.33, ns$ .

#### Are partners' ratings of satisfaction similar?

Hypothesis 1b: When satisfaction discrepancies were examined within couples, it was discovered that only 4% of couples had exactly equal ratings of own satisfaction, whereas

68% of couples differed five points or less in their levels of satisfaction. A five-point (or less) difference between partners' satisfaction levels was considered roughly equal, considering that the satisfaction scale ranges from -49 to +49 (a difference of 98 points). A scree analysis showed a sudden drop off after a difference of more than five points between partners' satisfaction ratings (see Figure 1). Thus, discrepancies of more than five points on satisfaction ratings were taken as an indication of a significant difference between partners' satisfaction levels. This was the case for approximately 32% of the couples. In 46% of those couples men were more satisfied than their female partners. In these couples, the men were an average of 6.2 points more satisfied than their partners were, with a maximum difference of 20 points between partners (on a 49-point scale). In this case, the man was highly satisfied and the woman was dissatisfied. In 50% of the couples the women were more satisfied than their male partners, with the women being an average of 4.06 points more satisfied than the men. In one couple, the woman was 22 points more satisfied than her male partner. Thus, although the correlation between partners' ratings of own satisfaction was positive, significant discrepancies between partners' satisfaction occurred in roughly one third of the couples.

Are individuals' estimates of partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction interdependent?

Hypothesis 2a: A positive correlation was expected between perceived partner satisfaction and partner's own satisfaction. This hypothesis was confirmed by a significant positive correlation for both men's perceptions of women's actual satisfaction ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ) and women's perceptions of men's actual satisfaction ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ).

Do individuals really know how satisfied their partners are?

Hypothesis 2b: It was predicted that individuals would know how satisfied their partners were. However, when estimations of partner satisfaction were compared to actual satisfaction, both men and women were often inaccurate in their perceptions of partner satisfaction. Specifically, only five (6.5%) men in the study were completely accurate in their perceptions of partner satisfaction (72 men were inaccurate). Similarly, only eleven (14.3%) women were completely accurate in their perceptions of partner satisfaction (66 women were inaccurate). The average absolute difference between estimates of partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction was  $M = 5.13$  points for men's estimates and  $M = 4.34$  points for women's estimates. This mean difference of four to five points is not a large discrepancy considering that similar to the own satisfaction scale, the perceived partner satisfaction scale also has a possible range of 98 points. In addition, a scree analysis revealed a significant decrease or "drop off" in accuracy of estimates of partner's satisfaction after a six-point discrepancy. This sharp decline was taken as an indication of a significant inaccuracy in perceptions of partner satisfaction. Roughly half (52%) of the participants were significantly inaccurate in their perceptions of partner satisfaction. The other 48% of participants were fairly accurate in their estimates, as indicated by a difference of six or fewer points between estimates of partner satisfaction and their partner's actual satisfaction.

No gender differences were found for the pattern of estimation of partner satisfaction. Specifically, 42% of men overestimated their partner's satisfaction by an average of 4.9 points (and by 20 points in one case), and 52% of men underestimated their partner's satisfaction by an average of 5.2 points and by a maximum of 22 points

(on a 49-point scale). Similarly, 42% of women overestimated their partner's satisfaction by an average of 4.3 points and a maximum of 13 points and 44% of women underestimated their partner's satisfaction by an average of 6.5 points and a maximum of 16 points. Thus, both genders appeared to be similar in their accuracy (or inaccuracy) of perceptions of partner satisfaction.

If partner satisfaction is very important to individuals, are those partners more likely to be satisfied?

Hypothesis 3a: The prediction that a positive correlation would exist between importance of partner satisfaction and partner's own satisfaction was not confirmed. Instead, the correlation between women's ratings of importance of partner satisfaction and men's actual satisfaction was non-significant ( $r = -.03$ , ns). Similarly, the correlation between men's ratings of importance of partner satisfaction and women's actual satisfaction was also non-significant ( $r = .12$ , ns).

Men and women's ratings of importance of partner satisfaction were not significantly different ( $M = 7.1$  and  $7.05$ , respectively),  $F(1, 150) = .05$ , ns. Thus, although both men and women perceived partner satisfaction to be quite important, these perceptions had no relation to partner's actual satisfaction.

The correlation between both partners' ratings of importance of partner satisfaction was non-significant ( $r = -.04$ , ns), indicating that partners' ratings of importance of partner satisfaction were not interdependent.

Do couples place similar amounts of importance on partner satisfaction?

Hypothesis 3b: In 42% of the couples, the men perceived partner satisfaction to be more important than their female partners did, by an average of 1.91 points more and by as

much as 5 points more (on a 9-point scale). In 40% of the couples, the women rated partner satisfaction as more important than their male partners, by an average of 1.93 points more and by as much as 6 points more. In 15% of the couples, both partners rated partner satisfaction as equally important. Thus, for most couples in Study 2, partners had quite different perceptions of the importance of partner satisfaction.

Are partners' perceptions of other relationship factors interdependent?

Hypotheses 4a: Correlations between both partners' perceptions of passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, perceived fairness, trust, and happiness were initially examined to determine whether partners' views in their relationship were interdependent. The results for each factor are discussed below.

Do partners share similar perceptions of other relationship factors?

Hypothesis 4b: Means of each relationship factor for men and women were compared, the differences between partners' ratings were computed, and frequencies of ratings were examined. This further analysis provided a more complete comparison of couples' ratings.

Passion, intimacy, and commitment. Positive correlations were found between partners' ratings of passion ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ), intimacy ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ) and commitment ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ). Also, mean ratings of passion, intimacy, and commitment were similar for men and women (Table 9),  $t(74) = .38, ns$ . However, when the differences between ratings were examined for passion, intimacy, and commitment, partners' perceptions were often quite different. Specifically, partners' ratings of passion differed an average of 15.51 points (on a 108-point scale). Further, in 48% of the couples, men reported more passion than their female partners, with an average of 17.03 points more passion. In one case, the

man's rating of passion was 66 points higher than his partner's rating of passion. In 52% of the couples, women reported more passion than their male partners, with an average of 14.1 points more passion reported by the women (the maximum difference was 35 points). In fact, no couples reported equal amounts of passion.

Only 10% of the couples in this study reported equal ratings of intimacy. In 48% of the couples, the male partner rated the relationship as more intimate than his female partner did, by an average of 11.65 points more and a maximum of 44 points more (on a 108-point scale). Women reported more intimacy than their male partners in 42% of the couples, by an average of 10.75 points more and a maximum of 38 points more. No gender difference was found for ratings of intimacy, ( $M = 94.32$  for women and  $M = 95.45$  for men),  $t(76) = .70$ , ns.

For ratings of commitment, only 1% of couples shared the same view, while in 47% of the couples, men were more committed. In these couples, men were an average of 15.8 points more committed than their female partners with a maximum difference of 53 points (on a 108-point scale). In 52% of the couples, women were more committed than their male partners, with these women being an average of 13.61 points more committed and a maximum of 47 points more committed than their male partners. No gender difference was found for ratings of commitment ( $M_s = 81.12$  and  $83.29$  for women and men, respectively),  $t(72) = .89$ , ns. Thus, although couples' ratings of passion, intimacy, and commitment were interdependent, partners generally differed a great deal in their ratings of these relationship factors.

Disclosure. The correlation between partners' ratings of willingness to disclose was non-significant ( $r = .16$ , ns). (See Table 9 for mean ratings). When the difference between

partners' ratings was computed for willingness to disclose, couples were found to differ an average of 7.94 points in their ratings. Only 6% of couples reported equal willingness to disclose. In 42% of the couples, men were more willing to disclose than their female partners by an average of 8.1 points and a maximum of 28 points (on a 56-point scale). In 52% of the couples women were more willing to disclose than their male partners by an average of 9 points and a maximum of 26 points. Thus, within most couples partners' willingness to disclose differed a great deal, yet no gender differences were found,  $t(76) = -1.00$ , ns.

**Perceived Fairness.** The correlation between partners' perceptions of fairness in the relationship was significantly negative ( $r = -.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that both partners agreed on the fairness of the relationship (whether it was fair or unfair in either direction). (See Table 9 for mean ratings). The average differences between partners' ratings of fairness was 0.04 points (on a 15-point scale). In 35% of the couples, the male partner saw the relationship as more fair than their female partner did, by an average of 0.39 points and a maximum of 1.2 points. In 65% of the couples, the female partner rated the relationship as more fair than did her male partner, by an average of 0.38 points and a maximum of 2.8 points. No gender difference was found for perceived fairness, ( $M_s = 0.04$  and  $0.07$  for women and men, respectively),  $t(76) = .43$ , ns. Thus, although most couples perceived the relationship to be quite fair, one partner always rated it as fairer than the other partner.

**Trust.** The correlation between partners' ratings of trust was non-significant ( $r = .18$ , ns). (See Table 9 for mean ratings). No gender differences were found,  $t(74) = .48$ , ns. The difference between partners' ratings of trust revealed an average difference of 13.65



points. Only 4% of couples reported equal trust. In 47% of the couples, men were more trusting by an average of 15.8 points and in 49% of the couples women were more trusting by an average of 12.8 points. In one couple, the male partner was 55 points more trusting than his partner and in another couple, the female partner was 73 points more trusting than her partner (on a 162-point scale). In these two cases, one partner was highly trusting while the other was quite untrusting. While these two couples represent extreme cases, the majority of couples in Study 2 consist of partners with unequal levels of trust in the relationship.

Happiness. A weak but significant positive correlation was found between partners' ratings of happiness ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ), and mean ratings of happiness were similar for men and women (Table 9),  $t(57) = -.47, ns$ . However, the absolute difference between partners' ratings was 1.12 points (on a 7-point scale). Further, in 36% of the couples, men reported being happier and in 41% of the couples, women reported being happier. Only 22% of the couples in Study 2 reported equal amounts of happiness in the relationship.

To summarize, partners' ratings of some relationship factors were interdependent, namely, passion, intimacy, commitment, fairness, and happiness in the relationship, yet ratings of disclosure and trust were not interdependent. Regarding the degree of similarity of perceptions within couples, partners tended to perceive relationship factors such as passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, trust, fairness, and happiness somewhat differently. However, although imbalance between partners' perceptions was common, it was equally common in both directions. That is, roughly half of the time, the female partner had higher ratings and half the time the male partner had higher ratings. Further, positive correlations between differences for each relationship factor indicate that those

partners who were less trusting were also the partners who rated the relationship as less passionate and less intimate, saw the relationship as less fair, and were less committed and less happy with the relationship (see Table 10 for correlation matrix).

Interestingly, discrepancies between partners' ratings of several relationship factors were associated with a decrease in own satisfaction. Specifically, differences in partners' ratings of passion were negatively correlated with own satisfaction for both women and men ( $r = -.46$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). Similarly, both men's and women's satisfaction levels were negatively correlated with differences in partners' intimacy ratings ( $r = -.42$  and  $-.45$  respectively,  $p < .01$ ) and with discrepancies between partners' commitment to the relationship ( $r = -.38$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$  for women and men, respectively). For both genders, the correlations between own satisfaction and differences in ratings of trust was also significantly negative ( $r = -.33$  for women and  $r = -.24$  for men,  $p < .01$  for both). Thus as differences between partners' ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, and trust increase, both partners' ratings of own satisfaction decreased. The correlations between differences in partners' perceptions of fairness and own satisfaction was significantly negative for women ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not for men ( $r = -.11$ , ns), whereas the correlation between differences for disclosure and own satisfaction was not significant for either gender ( $r = .07$  for women and  $-.07$  for men, ns).

### Discussion

Similar to Study 1, participants in this study were quite satisfied, trusting, committed, and happy with their relationships. The main goals of Study 2 were to

determine whether partners had similar views of the relationship and whether their perceptions of each other's satisfaction were accurate.

Are partners' ratings of satisfaction similar?

Couples' responses were compared to determine whether their ratings of satisfaction were similar or whether one partner could be satisfied while the other partner was not. Although own satisfaction between partners was positively correlated overall, when comparisons were made within couples, few partners were equally satisfied while in the majority of couples, one partner was more satisfied than the other. Some discrepancy between partners' ratings is to be expected, considering that possible scores on the satisfaction scale range 98 points. Thus any couples being exactly equal in their ratings was probably in part due to chance. A scree analysis indicated that couples who were fewer than five points apart in their ratings can be considered equal in their levels of satisfaction. Two thirds of the couples in this study fall into that category. The other third, however, differed more than five points in their levels of satisfaction. In fact, one couple differed 60 points in their ratings of own satisfaction, indicating that one partner was highly satisfied while the other partner was completely dissatisfied.

There are at least two possible explanations for this discrepancy between partners' satisfaction levels. First, one partner may actually be getting more outcomes than the other partner. As mentioned previously, satisfaction is defined as one's outcomes minus one's inputs. Although in most relationships, couples' inputs and outcomes generally equal themselves out over time, this study only examined satisfaction level at one point in time. Therefore, it is possible that at the time of the study, certain participants were benefiting more from the relationship than their partners were and thus, they reported

being more satisfied than their partners did. Perhaps if participants had been asked to consider their satisfaction over a longer period of time, ratings of own satisfaction would have been more similar between couples.

The second possible explanation for differences in satisfaction levels is that one partner may be more satisfied than the other partner because they have different comparison levels. As mentioned in the introduction to the current studies, comparison level (CL) is comprised of the expectations that an individual brings into the relationship based on past experiences (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If one partner previously had several positive relationships, that partner would have a high CL and unless his or her current relationship is very fulfilling, that partner will be less satisfied than someone who has lower CL. So in a relationship, if one partner has high CL and the other partner has low CL, they may have very different satisfaction levels, even if they are both receiving approximately the same amount of outcomes.

#### Do people know how satisfied their partner is?

Participants' estimates of their partner's satisfaction were compared to their partners' actual satisfaction to determine how accurate they were. Only 5 men and 11 women were accurate in their estimates of partner satisfaction. However, for roughly half of the couples, partners were only six or fewer points off, indicating that they were fairly accurate in perceptions of their partner's satisfaction. For the other half of the couples, partners overestimated or underestimated their partner's satisfaction by more than six points. At least three possible reasons can explain why participants were inaccurate in their perceptions of partner satisfaction. First, some individuals may base their estimates of partner satisfaction on the assumption that it is similar to their own level of

satisfaction. That is, some individuals may assume that their partner is just as satisfied as they are and that if their partner was less satisfied, they would surely know about it. This reasoning is similar to the idea of projection introduced in Study 1 where individuals may project their own satisfaction onto their partners. Consistent with Study 1, perceived partner satisfaction and own satisfaction were again significantly correlated in Study 2, providing support for the projection explanation. These individuals may also overestimate their partner's satisfaction by assuming that they have been good to their partner and so their partner must be pleased with the relationship. On the other hand (perhaps due to a low self-image) some participants may have underestimated their partner's satisfaction. That is, individuals who felt inadequate in the relationship may have believed that their partner would be much happier with someone else, even though the partner is actually quite content in the relationship.

Another explanation for the inaccuracies in estimates of partner satisfaction is the fact that participants may not reveal their actual satisfaction level to each other. Couples may not regularly (if ever) discuss their levels of satisfaction in the relationship, so partners may not even be aware of how different their ratings of satisfaction are. In addition, these relationships are fairly new, with the average length being 23 months. Social norms dictate that it is considered inappropriate to disclose too much early on in a relationship (Dion & Dion, 1978). Further, even if partners did discuss satisfaction in the relationship, it is quite likely that they avoid saying certain things. For instance, men who are dissatisfied with their relationship are unlikely to disclose those feelings to their partner (as found in Study 1). Or individuals may be unwilling to communicate high levels of satisfaction to their partners, perhaps to keep their partners guessing. Thus,

whether it is to spare hurt feelings, to avoid a negative confrontation, or to keep partners guessing, partners who do discuss their satisfaction levels with each other may not be completely truthful about their actual feelings.

The third reason for estimation inaccuracies could be that participants are motivated to believe that their partners are satisfied with the relationship. This reasoning is especially relevant to those individuals who overestimated their partner's satisfaction. Perhaps participants could only be satisfied if they first believed that their partners were satisfied. Because favorable perceptions of partner satisfaction seem to be more relevant than accuracy of estimates, some couples may prefer to see themselves and their partners as equally satisfied with the relationship, rather than face the possibility that their partner is discontent or dissatisfied in any way.

Do ratings of importance of partner satisfaction influence how satisfied that partner is?

It was predicted that ratings of importance of partner satisfaction would affect how satisfied that partner was. Specifically, participants who thought partner satisfaction was very important were expected to have highly satisfied partners while those who thought partner satisfaction was unimportant were expected to have less satisfied partners. It seems reasonable that if participants rated partner satisfaction as very important, they would benefit their partner often, thus increasing both their partner's outcomes in the relationship and their partner's satisfaction. Surprisingly, importance of partner satisfaction was unrelated to how satisfied partners were. Possible explanations for this lack of correlation concern the scale itself. As in Study 1, the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale had poor internal consistency and an attenuated response range in Study 2. It is possible that the attenuation of responses caused the correlation between

importance of partner satisfaction and partner's actual satisfaction to be insignificant. In addition, unlike Study 1, the correlation between importance of partner satisfaction and social desirability was significant in Study 2, suggesting that the skewness of responses may be due to participants wanting to answer in a desirable manner.

Aside from scale difficulties, another possible explanation for this counterintuitive finding is related to the way participants were questioned about importance of partner satisfaction. Specifically, participants were asked what they would be willing to do in a hypothetical situation by choosing between rewarding either their partners or themselves. However, if participants had been asked about actual past experiences, they may have responded differently than they did. It is very easy to say what one would do in a hypothetical situation but it is much more challenging to actually have to do it. Perhaps, when answering the questions, participants really thought they would reward their partner, yet in the past, have chosen to reward themselves instead. In this case, Partner A may have believed that he would choose to reward Partner B (high rating of importance of partner satisfaction) but Partner B based her own satisfaction on lack of past rewards provided by Partner A and so the two ratings were uncorrelated. Perhaps basing ratings of importance of partner satisfaction on what participants had actually done for their partners in the past would provide a stronger correlation to that partner's actual satisfaction.

There was also no relation between couples' perceptions of importance of partner satisfaction. Thus, how important participants viewed partner satisfaction to be had no connection to their partner's perception of importance of partner satisfaction. Again, the attenuation in response range may be responsible for the lack of correlations. Or, the

discrepancy between what individuals thought they would do and what they have tended to do in the past could again explain this inconsistency between couples. That is, how important one rates partner satisfaction to be at one point in time and how important they have treated partner satisfaction in the past could be completely different. Thus, it seems reasonable that partners would differ in their perceptions of importance of partner satisfaction. For instance, Partner A may have been getting few rewards from Partner B at the time of the study and feels that Partner B's satisfaction is unimportant until she begins to reward him again. In contrast, Partner B may have been getting several rewards from Partner A at the time of the study and thus rated partner satisfaction as very important.

It is somewhat difficult to measure importance of partner satisfaction, as the meaning is hard to define. What actually constitutes importance of partner satisfaction? Perhaps focussing on what individuals have actually done in the past is a better measure of this importance than situations that may or may not occur. Therefore, a suggestion for future research on importance of partner satisfaction is to focus on either importance ratings over time or past opportunities to reward partners, rather than on hypothetical situations.

#### Do partners have similar perceptions of other relationship factors?

Comparisons of partners' ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, trust, and happiness indicated that partners may perceive the relationship quite differently from one another. For most couples, one partner rated the relationship as more passionate than the other, one partner rated the relationship as more intimate than the other, and so on. Further, the partner who rated the relationship as more passionate was the same partner who rated it as more intimate, and was more committed, trusting, saw the



relationship as fairer, and was happier with the relationship. In general, one partner had a more positive view of the relationship than the other.

The differences between partners' relationship ratings were not related to gender. That is, in roughly half of the couples, the male partner rated the relationship more positively than his female partner rated it. In the other half of the couples, the female partner rated the relationship more favorably than her male partner did.

A possible explanation for these differences in partners' perceptions could again be the time frame issue of the study. As mentioned previously, Study 2 only measured participants' ratings of relationship factors at one point in time. It is very possible that at any given time, one partner may rate the relationship as more positively than the other partner, yet over time these discrepancies would balance themselves out. Perhaps if participants were asked to rate the passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, fairness, trust, and happiness in their relationship based on the entire duration of the relationship, their ratings would have been more similar as the differences between them evened out overall.

Study 2 also revealed that these discrepancies in partners' relationship perceptions are negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. That is, when couples differed in their perceptions of passion, intimacy, commitment, and trust, both partners had lower ratings of satisfaction compared to couples who had similar perceptions of these factors. Thus, couples who viewed the relationship similarly were more satisfied than couples who viewed it differently from one another. One possible explanation for these negative correlations is that partners may be aware that one of them is less content than the other and thus, their satisfaction with the relationship decreases as a result. As mentioned

previously, it is possible that individuals may be unable to be satisfied knowing that their partner is less than satisfied. Perhaps this reasoning applies to other relationship factors as well. That is, individuals may know that their partner is less committed and trusting in the relationship, making those individuals less satisfied than they would be if they knew their partner was just as committed and trusting as they themselves were. It makes sense that individuals feel comforted in knowing that their partner sees the relationship equally as passionate, intimate, and fair as they do and are just as committed and trusting as they are. Thus, if individuals are aware of a difference in views between themselves and their partner, they may feel threatened and become uneasy, resulting in a decrease in their own satisfaction.

A second possible reason for these negative correlations is that partners are already less satisfied and thus do not agree on other aspects of the relationship. For instance, perhaps Partner A is dissatisfied with her relationship and sees it as low in passion. Partner B may also be dissatisfied yet believe that they do have a passionate relationship. Thus, both partners have lower satisfaction levels, yet perceive other relationship factors differently.

Another possibility is that a third variable caused partners to differ in their ratings of relationship factors and to become less satisfied. For instance, competing influence on the relationship such as a heavy work load (or school term) could result in couples spending less time together, leading to both decreases in satisfaction levels and to differences in ratings of other variables. Perhaps Partner A would like to spend more time together and is not getting that desire fulfilled. She becomes less satisfied and sees the relationship as less intimate and less passionate and she becomes less committed as a

result. Partner B is the busy partner. He is also temporarily less satisfied but still thinks the passion and intimacy are intact in the relationship. As a result, both partners' satisfaction decreases and their ratings of other variables become increasingly different from one another. To summarize, whether differences in relationship ratings cause decreases in satisfaction or whether decreases in satisfaction lead to differences in relationship perceptions, or whether a third factor (such as the amount of time spent together) causes both, discrepancies in relationship perceptions do matter to relationship satisfaction.

## General Discussion

### Summary of the Current Findings

One major focus of the current research was to explore satisfaction in dating relationships and to examine its connection to perceived partner satisfaction and to other relationship variables such as passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, trust, perceived fairness, and happiness with the relationship. Consistent with previous research, satisfaction proved to be an important part of dating relationships. Specifically, significant positive correlations were found between own satisfaction and all of the above relationship variables. It seems likely that increases in variables such as passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, trust, perceived fairness, and happiness serve to increase one's satisfaction within a relationship. Conversely, increased satisfaction may lead to increases in passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, trust, perceived fairness, and happiness. In addition, own satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction were strongly correlated and perceived partner satisfaction was a significant of own satisfaction, as were passion, own outcomes, happiness, and trust. These findings indicate

that satisfaction may be influenced by other relationship factors, especially passion, perceived partner satisfaction, own outcomes, happiness, and trust. Thus, the results from the current studies confirm that satisfaction is an important factor to consider when examining dating relationships.

Another main focus of the current studies was twofold: to establish a measure of perceived partner satisfaction and to use the new measure to determine whether perceived partner satisfaction independently contributed to dating relationships. The Perceived Partner Satisfaction Scale was established as a reliable and useful measure of participants' perceptions of their partner's satisfaction. Results from both of the current studies indicate that perceived partner satisfaction is different from own satisfaction and that it is important to measure in addition to own satisfaction. Specifically, perceived partner satisfaction was a significant predictor of own satisfaction and it had several independent relations with other factors such as intimacy, trust, and happiness in the relationship. Thus, it was concluded that perceived partner satisfaction is an important factor to consider in dating relationships, especially when exploring issues such as own satisfaction, intimacy, trust and happiness.

Importance of partner satisfaction was another aspect of relationships that the current studies attempted to measure. Unfortunately, the 9-item scale devised for the studies proved to need some further adjustments. Participants' responses were positively skewed and because of this attenuation, the importance of partner satisfaction scale had few significant correlations with other variables. As previously suggested, measuring past situations or importance of partner satisfaction over time may be a more accurate

measure than using hypothetical situations. In addition, using real life experiences may result in more variability in participants' responses.

Aside from own and perceived partner satisfaction, another main focus of the current studies was to examine couples' relationship ratings in terms of their similarities and interdependence. Mixed results were found. Specifically, two thirds of the couples had similar ratings of own satisfaction and about half of the couples were fairly accurate in estimating their partners' satisfaction. (These results are based on scree analyses and may differ in actual significance levels for different studies). These findings suggest that even in the beginning of a relationship, many couples have about equal levels of relationship satisfaction and know how their partners feel about the relationship. However, many couples differed significantly in their satisfaction levels and were quite inaccurate in estimates of partner satisfaction. In addition, the majority of couples differed in their perceptions of passion, intimacy, commitment, trust, fairness, disclosure, and happiness in the relationship. Many of these differences may be due to lack of communication regarding perceptions or an unwillingness to disclose true feelings to each other. As a general rule or norm in new relationships, partners tend not to disclose too much early on (Archer & Burelson, 1980). Because the couples in the current studies were in fairly new relationships, they may have not yet had a chance to disclose their feelings about the relationship. Perhaps including couples who had been together for a number of years would have resulted in more similar perceptions of the relationship, as couples gradually revealed their perceptions of the relationship to each other.

### Implications of Findings

The results of the current studies have many important implications for both future research and for individuals involved in dating relationships. First, these studies confirm that own satisfaction depends on or may effect several relationship variables such as perceived partner satisfaction, importance of partner satisfaction, and ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, disclosure, fairness, trust, and happiness. In a sense, relationship satisfaction may be viewed as both the result of one's relationship perceptions and as a critical factor that shapes one's relationship perceptions.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the current studies is the fact that perceived partner satisfaction was found to be an important variable in relationship research. These studies suggest that although relationship researchers tended to overlook it in the past, perceived partner satisfaction needs to be considered in addition to own satisfaction both by researchers examining relationships and by the individuals in those relationships. These studies indicate that perceived partner satisfaction is different from own satisfaction and independently related to many other relationship factors. The fact that perceived partner satisfaction was a significant predictor of own satisfaction and was associated with intimacy, commitment, trust, and happiness, indicates that individuals consider their partners' satisfaction when evaluating their own relationships. This makes sense considering that it would be difficult to attempt to alleviate problems in one's relationship by focussing solely on own satisfaction and ignoring partner's satisfaction and perceptions of the relationship. The current research presents a strong argument for incorporating perceived partner satisfaction into future relationship research and into couples' therapy, as individuals need to be aware of their partner's satisfaction and their

contributions to that satisfaction. Results of the current studies indicate that individuals in dating relationships do consider partner satisfaction to be important to their own satisfaction and evaluations of their relationship.

The current studies also managed to dispel some popular stereotypes regarding dating relationships. First, findings from these studies discredit the belief that partner's satisfaction matters less to men than it does to women. Instead, these studies revealed that perceived partner satisfaction was actually the best predictor of own satisfaction for men and that perceptions of partner satisfaction were correlated with men's own happiness, passion, and commitment to the relationship to the same extent as for women. These findings provide a positive view of individuals in the relationships. Specifically, they indicate that both men and women were equally concerned with their partners' satisfaction in the relationship. A second stereotype that was challenged was the belief that women are more 'in tune' to the relationship than men are. The current results indicate that no gender differences occurred in accuracy of estimates of partner satisfaction. In addition, both men and women overestimated and underestimated their partners' satisfaction roughly equally. This suggests that men and women are equally accurate (or inaccurate) in their estimates of partner satisfaction and that both genders know their partners' equally well. A third stereotype that was challenged was the belief that women are more willing to disclose than men are. The current research found that men are quite willing to disclose provided they were highly satisfied in the relationship. Alternatively, men's willingness to disclose may have led to an increase in their own satisfaction. Thus, men's disclosure is interdependent with other relationship factors, such as satisfaction. This finding is of particular importance considering the dominant

belief about disclosure is the generalization that women are always more willing to disclose than men are. The current results suggest that this generalization is not always valid and identify a variable that influences or may benefit from the disclosing behavior of men. Overall, these results indicate that several traditional beliefs regarding men and women in relationships are inaccurate and that men and women tend to be similar (rather than different) in their relationship perceptions.

### Future Research Suggestions

Although the current studies revealed many important findings regarding relationship satisfaction in dating relationships, they also bring up many issues that need to be addressed in the future.

First, the Importance of Partner Satisfaction Scale needs to be modified in order to improve its internal consistency and response variability. To start, the meaning of importance of partner satisfaction needs to be reassessed. Does this importance imply a willingness to reward one's partner? If so, perhaps measuring past opportunities to reward one's partner would be a more accurate measure of this importance than the hypothetical situations used in the current studies.

Further testing of the Perceived Partner Satisfaction scale is also necessary. The current studies established it as a good measure of participants' perceptions of their partner's satisfactions and determined that it is different from own satisfaction. Future studies need to examine this concept in terms of its impact on other relationship factors. Specifically, now that it has been found as an independent contributor to relationships, the next step is to examine perceptions of partner satisfaction and other factors in a time series causal analysis. For instance, at Time 1 perceptions of partner's satisfaction and



own ratings of passion, intimacy, commitment, trust, and happiness could be measured. Then six months later (Time 2), participants' perceptions of partner's satisfaction and own ratings of the relationship factors could again be measured to assess how participants' perceptions and relationship ratings change over time and how they influence each other. Another extension of the research could be to examine how perceptions of partner satisfaction predict whether couples breakup or remain in the relationship. For example, do perceptions of higher partner satisfaction increase the likelihood that the couple will stay together in comparison to perceptions of lower partner satisfaction? In order to conduct this research, couples could be contacted a few months after perceived partner satisfaction was measured to determine whether they were still together.

A related future step to consider in this line of research is to track couples over time. This longitudinal research would extend the current studies in two ways. First, it would allow the researcher to determine which relationships remain intact and which relationships terminate. By tracking couples, it can be determined which factors best predict breakups and which factors are most critical in keeping couples together. Second, longitudinal research would allow for measuring satisfaction and other relationship variables and averaging participants' ratings over time. This would allow for examining how ratings change over time and for testing the time frame reasoning that was used to account for differences in satisfaction between partners. That is, it could be determined whether differences in partners' perceptions are a function of measuring the factors at only one point in time and whether these differences would average out over time.

In summary, the current studies revealed many interesting findings regarding own and perceived partner satisfaction and their relations with several relationship factors. They were used to challenge many traditional beliefs and revealed that men and women, for the most part are in fairly satisfying relationship and care a great deal about their partner's satisfaction in addition to their own. These studies on satisfaction in dating relationship also provide many interesting issues to explore in future research.

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## Appendix A

## Perceived Partner Satisfaction (PPS)

Answer the following questions by circling the number between -3 and +3 that best describes your thoughts about your partner's feelings.

8. How well do you think you meet your partner's needs?  
(not well) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (very well)
9. In general, how satisfied do you think your partner is with your relationship?  
(not satisfied) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (very satisfied)
10. How good do you think your partner would say your relationship is, compared to most?  
(not good) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (very good)
11. In your opinion, how often does your partner wish he/she hadn't gotten into this relationship?  
(not often) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (very often)
12. To what extent do you think your relationship has met your partner's original expectations?  
(not met) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (well met)
13. How much do you think your partner loves you?  
(not much) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (very much)
14. How many problems do you think your partner would say there are in your relationship?  
(not many) -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 (many)

## Appendix B

## Importance of Partner Satisfaction (IPS)

Choose only **one** option for each of the following questions.

15. You realize you've been spending most of your time at work and little time with your partner. Right now, you are working on a project you are really excited about. Your partner is obviously unhappy to be left alone so often, and you know he/she would love it if you would start spending less time at work and more time with him/her.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You spend less time at work and more time with your partner
- b. You continue to spend as much time at work as you have been

16. You and your partner have been planning to go away together for the weekend (just the two of you). A couple of days before you are supposed to go, a friend calls you and says they have just received tickets to a concert that you have been dying to attend but couldn't get tickets for. You know that your partner has been really looking forward to the weekend trip.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You cancel the trip and go to the concert
- b. You go on the trip with your partner and miss the concert

17. The company you work for has offered you the chance at a better job (more responsibility and more pay). The problem is that the job is in another province. Because of commitments to family and work, your partner can't move.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You turn down the better job and stay with your partner
- b. You take the better job

18. You know your partner would be very happy if the two of you could spend a week of your summer holidays with his/her family that lives out of town. You would have to stay with his/her family in their home during the entire visit. The problem is that you don't really get along with your partner's parents and you know that spending time with them would be stressful and not relaxing.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You offer to give up a week of holidays to spend it with your partner's family
- b. You refuse to spend your holidays with your partner's family



19. You're reading the paper and you notice a film is playing that your partner really wants to see. The type of film does not interest you at all; in fact, you would find it extremely bored. The problem is, you know that if you mention it, your partner would definitely want you to go with him/her.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You mention the film and see it with your partner
- b. You don't mention the film to your partner

20. You are at the shopping mall by yourself when you see something in the store window that your partner has been wanting for him/herself for a long time. You consider surprising your partner with the gift, but buying it would mean spending the money you were saving (for the past year) to buy something for yourself.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You bypass the gift for your partner and buy the item you've been saving for
- b. You buy the gift for your partner and go without the item for yourself

21. After being really exhausted from schoolwork, you finally have some free time. You really feel like you need some time alone to unwind, so you plan to spend it relaxing by yourself. You've been neglecting your partner and know that he/she would love to spend the time doing something together.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You spend the time alone
- b. You offer to spend the time with your partner

22. You have been having some problems in the relationship with your partner. He/she has mentioned that the two of you should go for relationship counseling but the thought of telling a stranger about your problems makes you very uncomfortable.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You tell your partner that you won't go for counseling
- b. You agree to go for counseling with your partner

23. Lately, you've been late every time that you and your partner have plans together. Even though your partner hasn't said anything about it, you know it's been bothering him/her.

Which would you choose? (choose one option only)

- a. You continue to be late
- b. You make a commitment to show up on time when the two of you have plans together

Table 1

Study 1: Descriptive Statistics for Own Satisfaction, Perceived Partner Satisfaction,Importance of Partner Satisfaction, and Other Related Variables

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Actual Range	Possible Range
Own Satisfaction	12.39	7.32	-15 to 21	-21 to 21
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	13.38	6.0	-7 to 21	-21 to 21
Importance of Partner Satisfaction	6.58	1.42	3 to 9	0 to 9
Trust	25.59	14.43	-7 to 54	-54 to 54
Commitment	78.68	21.57	18 to 108	12 to 108
Passion	82.78	19.99	17 to 108	12 to 108
Intimacy	91.23	17.48	12 to 108	12 to 108
Disclosure	12.18	8.16	-10 to 24	-24 to 24
Perceived Fairness	-.031	0.31	-2.93 to 1.07	-8.89 to 8.89

Table 2

Study 1: Significant Gender Differences Between Means for Dependent Variables.

Predictor	Gender	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Trust	Women	129	27.35	2.17	.03
	Men	90	23.08		
Disclosure	Women	130	13.58	3.12	.00
	Men	92	10.18		
Intimacy	Women	131	93.24	2.05	.04
	Men	93	88.41		

Table 3

Study 1: Bivariate and Partial Correlations between Own and Perceived Partner Satisfaction and Passion, Intimacy, and Commitment

Variable	Own Satisfaction	
	Bivariate	Partial
Passion	.76**	.32**
Intimacy	.75**	.03
Commitment	.72**	.03
Variable	Perceived Partner Satisfaction	
	Bivariate	Partial
Passion	.54**	-.18*
Intimacy	.59**	.20*
Commitment	.53**	-.01

Note: Partial correlations for own satisfaction control for perceived partner satisfaction and the other two predictors. Partial correlates for perceived partner satisfaction control for own satisfaction and the other two predictors.

\*\*  $p < .001$

\*  $p < .01$

Table 4

**Study 1: Means of Own Satisfaction for Each Level of Importance of Partner Satisfaction**


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Number of rewards given to partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mean level of own Satisfaction	-	-	4.7 <sub>a</sub>	7.1 <sub>b</sub>	11.7 <sub>c</sub>	12.1 <sub>c</sub>	13.0 <sub>c</sub>	13.9 <sub>c</sub>	15.2 <sub>c</sub>

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Note. Different sub-letters indicate significant differences between means.

Table 5

Study 1: Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Own Satisfaction

Variable	<b>B</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>
Step 1: Passion	.29	.76
Step 2: Passion	.19	.50
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	.57	.48
Step 3: Passion	.18	.48
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	.57	.48
Own Outcomes	6.89	.15
Step 4: Passion	.15	.41
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	.50	.42
Own Outcomes	6.14	.135
Happiness	1.05	.16
Step 5: Passion	.14	.37
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	.46	.39
Own Outcomes	5.89	.13
Happiness	.88	.17
Trust	.01	.12

Note:  $R^2 = .58$  for Step 1;  $\Delta R^2 = .74$  for Step 2;  $\Delta R^2 = .77$  for Step 3;  $\Delta R^2 = .78$

for Step 4;  $\Delta R^2 = .79$  for Step 5 ( $ps < .001$ ). Factors that did not significantly predict

own satisfaction were commitment, disclosure, intimacy, and partner's outcomes.

Table 6

Study 1: Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived PartnerSatisfaction

Variable	B	$\beta$
Step 1: Own Satisfaction	.64	.75
Step 2: Own Satisfaction	.66	.78
Own Outcomes	-4.79	-.125
Step 3: Own Satisfaction	.57	.68
Own Outcomes	-4.83	-.126
Happiness	.81	.15

Note:  $R^2 = .57$  for Step 1 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .58$  for Step 2 ( $p < .05$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .59$  for

Step 3 ( $p < .05$ ). Factors that did not significantly predict perceived partner satisfaction were passion, commitment, disclosure, intimacy, and partner's outcomes.

Table 7

Study 1: Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Partner Satisfaction as a Function of Gender

Variable	<u>B</u>	$\beta$
Women		
Step 1: Own Satisfaction	.53	.68
Step 2: Own Satisfaction	.36	.45
Trust	.13	.31
Step 3: Own Satisfaction	.44	.56
Trust	.12	.30
Own Outcomes	-8.19	-.21
Men		
Step 1: Own Satisfaction	.82	.87

Note: For women:  $R^2 = .46$  for Step 1 ( $p < .001$ );  $\Delta R^2 = .51$  for Step 2 ( $p < .01$ );

$\Delta R^2 = .54$  for Step 3 ( $p < .01$ ). For men:  $R^2 = .76$  for Step 1 ( $p < .001$ ).



Table 8

Study 2: Descriptive Statistics for Own Satisfaction, Perceived Partner Satisfaction, Importance of Partner Satisfaction, and Other Related Variables

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Actual Range	Possible Range
Own Satisfaction	13.66	5.29	-1 to 21	-21 to 21
Perceived Partner Satisfaction	12.76	6.09	-14 to 21	-21 to 21
Importance of Partner Satisfaction	7.08	1.41	3 to 9	0 to 9
Trust	25.75	15.02	-37 to 52	-54 to 54
Commitment	81.97	18.51	24 to 108	12 to 108
Passion	86.87	15.58	36 to 108	12 to 108
Intimacy	94.89	12.58	51 to 108	12 to 108
Disclosure	12.53	8.02	-14 to 24	-24 to 24
Happiness	4.25	1.07	2 to 6	0 to 6
Perceived Fairness	-0.07	0.41	-3.2 to 2.0	-8.89 to 8.89

Table 9

Study 2: Means of Dependent Variables According to Gender.

Variable	Women's Mean Rating	Men's Mean Rating
Passion	86.41	87.31
Intimacy	94.32	95.45
Commitment	80.48	83.45
Disclosure	13.12	11.94
Fairness	0.44	0.67
Trust	25.18	26.32
Happiness	4.23	4.26

Table 10

Correlations between Differences in Partners' Ratings of Relationship Factors.

Factor	Trust	Disclose	Fairness	Passion	Intimacy	Commitment	Happiness
Trust	-	.18		.48**	.64**	.48**	.47**
Disclose	.18	-		.10	.19	.13	-.07
Fairness	.33**	-.08	-	.07	.10	.14	.14
Passion	.48**	.10		-	.78**	.87**	.51**
Intimacy	.64**	.19		.78**	-	.75**	.58**
Commitment	.48**	.13		.87**	.75**	-	.52**
Happiness	.47**	-.07		.51**	.58**	.52**	-

\*\*p &lt; .01

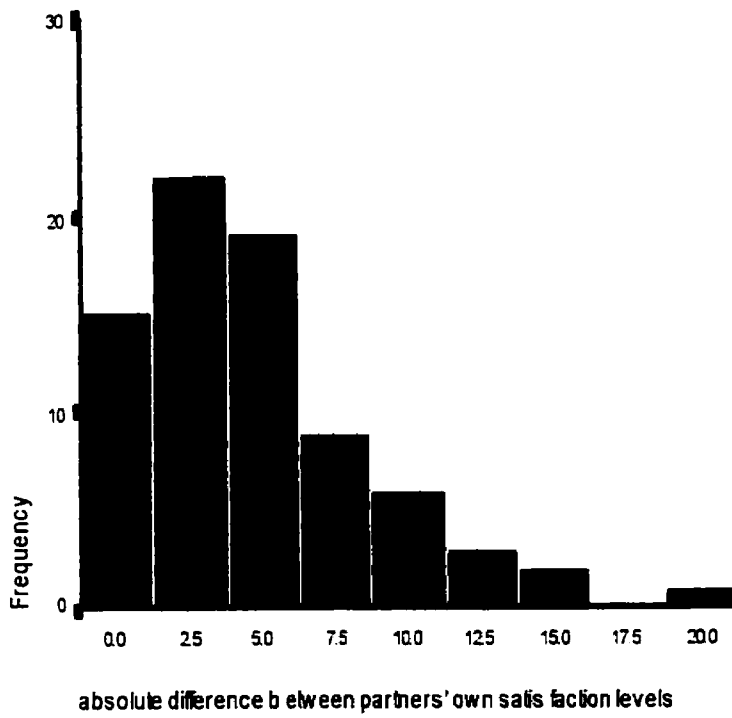


Figure 1. Scree plot of frequency distribution of the absolute difference between partners' satisfaction levels.