

Summer 8-15-2018

# The People We Like: Do Introversion-Extroversion and Commitment Affect Evaluation of Potential Partners?

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The People We Like:

Do Introversion-Extroversion and Commitment Affect Evaluation of Potential Partners?

by

Naquan Ross

A Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science in  
Experimental Psychology-Thesis with a Concentration in Behavioral Sciences

In

The Department of Psychology

Seton Hall University

August, 2018

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# Approval Letter

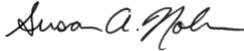
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
College of Arts & Sciences

## APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Masters Candidate, Naquan Ross, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the master's thesis for the M.S. during summer semester, 2018.

### THESIS COMMITTEE (please sign and date beside your name)

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents who passed away throughout the process of this thesis: Gwendolyn Richardson, Joseph Richardson, and Christine Givans. Thank you for your unconditional support and love. I know you all would be pleased.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Susan Teague, as well as my committee members, Dr. Susan Nolan and Dr. Andrew Simon. Thank you for devoting your knowledge, time, and support to this work. This process was challenging, rewarding, and impossible without all of you by my side. I would also like to thank my close friends, cohort, and other professors for providing me with the personal and professional tools I needed to complete this process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, especially my mother, Persha Richardson. Thank you for your faith and words of encouragement. I am grateful for you being in the wings as I embarked on this journey. Thank you for keeping me focused when obstacles came my way unexpectedly. I cannot thank you and everyone else enough.

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## Abstract

The present study assessed whether similarity of a hypothetical partner on Introversion-Extroversion, along with partner preference for long-term or short-term relationships, might vary according to participants' own Introversion-Extroversion. MANOVA results suggest three important points. First, ratings by extrovert participants showed higher levels of romantic interest for extroverted, rather than introverted, hypothetical partners; introvert participants' ratings did not differ between introvert and extrovert partners on this dimension. Second, the similarity of the participant and the hypothetical partner on Introversion-Extroversion appeared to influence interpersonal interest, romantic interest, and commitment potential. Last, the partner's commitment level may drive participants' non-platonic interest and potential to commitment to the partner. Along with the effect of commitment, there are indicators for the liking of both similar and dissimilar others.

## **Introduction**

Research focused on preferences and mate selection in the context of personality has gathered substantial attention in the scientific community (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Feingold, 1992; Buss, 1985; Chang, Wang, Shackelford, & Buss, 2011; Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Hendrick & Brown, 1971; Neto, Da Conceição Pinto, & Furnham, 2011). Research on attraction and desire, in particular, focuses on the concept of preferences for others (Bradbury & Karney, 2010; Broome, 1983). Relationship attraction is often referred to as a force that draws people together regardless of conscious desires (Gruman, Schneider, & Coutts, 2017). Relationship desire is often a conscious coveting, which is closely related to attraction, because people who are attentive to their personal desires attract people who are suited for them (Buss, 2016; Fairbairn, 1952; Losier, 2012). In other words, attraction is something that happens automatically, without volition, whereas desire is more of an intentional and mindful process. If people are purposely choosing potential partners based on compatibility, it would be indicative to focus on personality as one of the most basic measurements of compatibility. .

Personality is comprised of the collective qualities that describe an individual's character and may influence that individual's behavior (Revelle, 1995). It consists of the individual differences that contribute to one's pattern of feeling, thinking, and behaving (Kazdin, 2000). The reinforcement-affect model of attraction suggests that people with similar personalities tend to have successful relationships (Clore & Byrne, 1974). We look for people to reinforce the traits we possess, and people looking for those reinforcements

will find them in someone who is similar to them. In other words, “*birds of a feather flock together.*” However, even four decades after this research was initially published, the commonsense belief persists that “*opposites attract*”.

The phrase, *opposites attract*, suggests that people who are different from each other feel connected and drawn to each other. If attraction and desire are closely related, the non-scientific community likely may mean that *opposites desire novelty* when they say *opposites attract*. People may be interested in someone who is different from them because the other person is new or unfamiliar. In order to critically analyze these claims, it is necessary to examine the existing research documenting the effects of similarity on attraction.

### **Similarity, Complementarity, and Self-expansion**

The principle of similarity in attraction is the belief that individuals like others who are similar to them. People who are perceived to have characteristics and qualities in common appear to like and respect each other (Byrne, 1961; George, Luo, Webb, Pugh, Martinez, & Foulston, 2015). You are likely to prefer a stranger who is similar to you than one who is dissimilar. Similar attitudes also appear to significantly influence attraction (Byrne, Nelson, & Reeves, 1966; George et al., 2015). For example, two individuals who agree on a political issue may like each other more because of that agreement. Research even supports the notion that the more similar you are to someone you like or are dating, the more likely you are to marry that person. Buss (1985) refers to peoples' preferences for similar others in the mate selection process as assortative mating. Buss pointed out that age, religion, and proximity are three attributes that are typically present in assortative relationships, with age being the most important phenotype that individuals share.

Essentially, you are likely to marry someone of a similar age and religion, and who lives in the area where you live, work, or go to school.

There is more research to support the similarity and assortative mating phenomena. Botwin, Buss, and Shackelford (1997) conducted a study of both married and non-married romantic couples and found that both couple groups were similar in age, religious beliefs, intelligence, and alcohol/drug consumption. Furthermore, the researchers noticed that both demographically and anecdotally, married romantic couples were more similar than were non-married romantic couples. Romantic partners were even characteristically similar when it came to personality (Youyou, Stillwell, Schwartz, & Kosinski, 2017). Similarity appears to represent the essence of interpersonal attraction, but yet there exist individuals who have non-platonic intimate involvements with dissimilar partners.

One theory, complementarity, helps us to understand attraction between dissimilar people by stating that people may want someone who complements or balances them out in a way that completes or fulfills them (Bradbury & Karney, 2010). It is similar to the Chinese philosophy *you are the yin to my yang*. A study of 760 college-educated singles using a dating site found that most people wanted a partner with similar personality characteristics, such as those in the Five-Factor Model. But when they were explicitly asked, 85.7% of them said they preferred a complementary mate to a similar mate (Dijkstra & Barelds, 2008).

De Jong and Reis (2014) hypothesized that individuals would prefer a significant other who complements them sexually versus being similar in this respect. They surveyed 304 heterosexual couples, who were either dating, engaged, or married, and found that sexual complementarity was consistently associated with sexual satisfaction; similarity was

not. Essentially, in non-platonic relationships people tend to prefer an individual who complements their sexual preferences. De Jong and Reis (2014) stated that one partner, for example, might enjoy and prefer conventional types of physical intimacy more so than the other partner. In other words, people tend to enjoy certain sexual activities over others, which may not always be synchronous with their current partner.

De Jong and Reis (2015) replicated their study a year later, focusing primarily on same-sex couples. Their findings on same-sex men were consistent with those of the previous study, but there was an interesting difference among same-sex women. De Jong and Reis (2015) found that female partners tended to prioritize emotional congruence, intimacy, and equality when it comes to sex. Same-sex women appear to want someone more similar than complementary in their intimate relationships. Except for same-sex female partners, individuals prefer to have different roles in sexual behavior. If sexual opposites desire each other, partner complementarity would be preferable (DeJong & Reis, 2014; 2015). De Jong and Reis (2015) believe that men, especially, tend to be more goal-oriented and actively driven with satisfying their partner when it comes to sexual complementarity needs, because they are aware that they need to fulfill a certain role for their partner.

Similarly, men tend to show a slight preference for complementarity needs when rating a stranger who shows signs of dependence and neediness (Seyfried & Hendrick, 1973). In other words, men seem to subtly like someone who shows this succorant behavior of actively wanting affection, when they themselves generally do not act in such a way. In light of this, complementarity theory seems to be more relevant when it comes to biological sex and gender roles in relationships.

Gender differences appear to carry over to mate selection as well. In one meta-analysis, female participants were shown to value character, intelligence, ambitiousness, and socioeconomic status more so than male participants when assessing a potential romantic partner (Feingold, 1992). Similarly, a cross-cultural study showed that Chinese women, more so than men, preferred an exciting personality, dependability, sociability, emotional stability, and maturity in a romantic partner (Chang et al., 2011). So, although several differences across genders have been observed, Feingold (1992) found no significant gender differences concerning partner preference for personality and humor.

In congruence with complementarity theory, the self-expansion model highlights the way in which differences may play a role in desiring opposites. The self-expansion model explains the allure of dissimilar others based on the notion that individuals are interested in relationships with dissimilar others in order to grow and evolve as a person. In other words, people may want to assimilate the characteristics and views of others into themselves (Aron & Aron, 1997). For example, a very shy, studious man may be attracted to an outgoing sociable woman because she may help him become more outgoing and sociable, too. We want to acquire qualities we desire but do not have, and one way to do so is to be connected with someone who possesses them. As such, it follows that the more differences between partners in a relationship, the more opportunities for self-expansion exist in that relationship.

### **Long-term and Short-term Relationships**

Similarity, complementarity, and self-expansion explanations lead to different predictions about who will become non-platonic partners. Perhaps the relevance of these principles depends on whether a person is seeking a short-term or long-term relationship.

The concept of strategic pluralism refers to peoples' pursuance of short-term or long-term relationships depending on their circumstances (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). Gangestad and Simpson (2000) state that there are differences in the types of relationships people seek. In long-term relationships, people seek high levels of partner commitment and intimacy. Seen within in the context of Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, this would be referred to as companionate love (1986). In other words, people in this type of relationship view their significant other as a companion for an unlimited amount of time. Most individuals in these long-term relationships eventually get, or are already, married (Sternberg, 1986). Sternberg emphasizes commitment frequently and suggests that it is the driving factor that truly makes the relationship long-term, because he explicitly defines it as a long-term investment (Johnson, 1973; Sternberg, 1986). We expect it to last, because we are committing.

When the commitment is high, and the relationship is likely to be long-term, we value certain qualities in partners more than other qualities (Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate, 2000). Intrinsic and internal traits such as honesty, friendliness, and are attributes that individuals considering long-term relationships find appealing (Regan et al., 2000). Evolutionarily, both men and women struggle with problems of commitment, good parenting, and gene quality in long-term mate selection, because those characteristics are pertinent to their satisfaction and compatibility in their relationships (Buss & Schmidt, 1993). Some people however, do not value such attributes, and that is usually because they are interested in short-term relationships only (Buss, 2016).

In the case of short-term relationships, people are seeking passion with little or no commitment. According to Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, this is referred to as an

infatuation or fatuous love (1986). In other words, people in these relationships are driven by passion or even obsessive love, and the relationship may be viewed as shallow and without intimacy (Sternberg, 1986). These relationships start and end very quickly and seem to center on physiological interest and arousal (Sternberg, 1986). These short-term relationships are often referred to as flings, one-night stands, or hookups (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010; Bradbury & Karney, 2010). In a short-term relationship, people tend to value physical and external attributes as more important when considering a potential partner, (Regan et al, 2000).

Attributes such as sex drive, health, and physical attractiveness are qualities that individuals who are considering short-term relationships find appealing. These findings are also characteristic of teenagers in relationships. Regan and Joshi (2003) found that adolescents desire intellect more so in long-term, romantic relationships than physical characteristics and sex drive as they do in short term, sexual relationships. Essentially, individuals interested in short-term relationships are not necessarily interested in commitment, but in passion. Sex and lust are subsidiaries of passion (Sternberg, 1986), which is necessary for a relationship to thrive and be consummated. Research suggests a clear association between relationship and sexual satisfaction, but having only sexual satisfaction does not equate to relationship satisfaction (Byers, 2005).

Evolutionarily, women struggle with identifying short-term vs. long-term mates and men struggle with identifying women who are sexually accessible (Buss & Schmidt, 1993). This may explain why some people who are seeking long-term relationships end up in short-term relationships, and vice versa. Individuals seeking long-term relationships may attract partners based on similarity, whereas those seeking short-term relationships may

desire partners based on complementarity or self-expansion. According to Buss (2016), people desire particular characteristics in one mate and then desire different characteristics in another mate, due to the notion that people's desired characteristics can evolve and change across partners. The desires and the appeals of short-term and long-term relationships are vast, and these may vary among people, perhaps according to their personality traits or life circumstances.

### **Extroversion and Introversion**

Introversion-Extroversion (I-E) is one of the major human personality dimensions (Wiggins, 1996). Jung, who originated the concept, states that extroverts are individuals who think objectively, tend to want to know and feel things for themselves, and can anticipate the wants of others intuitively (Jung, 2016). Stereotypically, extroverts are individuals who are very outgoing, persuasive, actively communicative, and entertaining. According to The Five-Factor Model, extroverts tend to have a fondness for large social gatherings, and active styles of living. They have an affectionate nature, and an optimistic disposition (Diener & Lucas, 2016). In other words, extroversion is described as a personality type that is deemed admirable. Some individuals who are not, in fact, extroverts might identify themselves as extroverts, because it is perceived as a positive and desirable social trait (Star, 1962). Our society idealizes the extroverted personality so much that many seek the characteristics for themselves. In a study of interpersonal attraction, researchers found that extroverts like other extroverts, while introverts also report liking extroverts (Hendrick & Brown, 1971). Apparently, many types of people see extraversion as a desirable set of personality traits. This preference for extraverted partners by introverts goes against the principles of similarity and assortative mating. Thus, introverts

appear to occasionally act against the principle of similarity.

Introverts are individuals who think subjectively, and rely on their inner empathies to understand their own and other peoples' feelings (Jung, 2016). According to The Five-Factor Model, introverts may display unenthusiastic, sober, and aloof behaviors (Diener & Lucas, 2016). These individuals are stereotypically reserved, introspective, and noncontroversial. Distinctively, extroverts have a lower arousal and seek additional stimulation, whereas introverts have inherent high arousal and thus avoid stimulation (Eysenck, 1964.)

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model may be useful when looking at social interaction between introverts and extroverts. According to this model, one member of a dyad's performance is influenced by the performance of the other member of the same dyad (Chow, Buhrmester, & Tan, 2014; Cuperman & Ickes, 2009). This suggests that introverts have better initial interactions with each other as compared to mixed-personality type of pairs such as introvert-extrovert. Yet, introverts like and will desire extroverts over introverts when directly asked about their preference (Agarwal & Kumar, 1978). The dynamics of interaction between introvert and extrovert partners may not be well understood as of yet.

One particular study suggests that a moderating variable may influence personality preferences. Amodio and Showers (2005) conducted a study of college students who were involved in relationships to see if commitment level was related to preference for similar or dissimilar partners. They concluded that commitment level moderates similarity and dissimilarity preference. Specifically, participants involved in a high-commitment relationship preferred and were involved with a more similar partner, whereas

participants involved in a low-commitment relationship preferred and were involved with a less similar partner, (Amodio & Showers, 2005). The authors suggest this may relate to the self-expansion model, in that the preferences and characteristics of an individual may determine whom they want, and is driven by their personality and perceived level of commitment. Therefore, people's personality preferences are subject to change across other factors (Whyte & Torgler, 2017).

Relevant research on speed dating documents how an individual's initial, stated preferences in partner characteristics are often not consistent with the partner chosen spontaneously in that situation. These stated preferences are more reflective of the type of partner they end up with in the future (Asendorpf, Penke, & Back, 2011; Castro & de Araujo Lopes, 2011; Gerlach, Arslan, Schultze, Reinhard, & Penke, 2017; Goetz, 2013; Li et al., 2013). People are often open to exploring a variety of experiences through different types of relationships; thus, their preferences may change depending on the particular situation, such as speed dating versus conventional dating (Asendorpf et al., 2011; England & Bearak, 2014). In the context of this present experimental study, introverts and extroverts may desire each other in certain circumstances, although they may interact with and be better suited for partners of a similar personality. These differences in partner preference may depend on the type of relationship wanted, short-term or long-term.

### **Present Study**

Based on a synthesis of the principles and research associated with similarity theory, complementarity theory and the self-expansion model, I hypothesize that there will be an interaction between partner similarity, term of relationship, and participant Introversion-Extroversion (I-E). Specifically, a three-way interaction is predicted, in that

extroverts will desire similar others in long-term relationships, but dissimilar others in short-term relationships because they have no expectation of committing (Amodio & Showers, 2005). On the other hand, it is expected that introverts will desire dissimilar others in both long-term and short-term relationships since introverts demonstrate a liking for extroverts more so than the other way around (Agarwal & Kumar, 1978).

The research on partner preference and liking in introverts and extroverts supports the idea that opposites may desire novelty under certain instances, while “birds may flock together” in others. It is expected that participants’ own classification of I-E, along with the I-E similarity of the partner, and commitment level of the partner would determine participants’ ratings of potential relationship partners.

The independent variables in this study are (1) Participant Introversion-Extroversion (I-E) score, (2) Similarity of Introversion-Extroversion classification of the profiled partner, and (3) Long-term vs. short-term relationship preference portrayed in partner profile (which is referred to as partner’s commitment level), with the first variable being categorical and the latter two being manipulated. Dependent variables will be participant reactions to the partner profile. These will be assessed on three dimensions: interpersonal attraction, romantic interest, and commitment.

## **Method**

### **Overview**

Responses to the Five-Factor Model scale will be used to assess participant's personality characteristics, with Introversion-Extroversion (I-E) being the key variable of interest. Participant reactions to the profile they read will serve as dependent variables. Attraction to the stimulus person was assessed on three dimensions with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.93: Romantic Interest (Campbell, 1999), Interpersonal Interest (Montoya and Horton, 2004), and Commitment Potential (Lund, 1985; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009; Sato, 2005). The wording of these instruments was minimally modified to tap reactions to a hypothetical, and not an actual, stimulus person as in the original version.

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from the psychology research participant pool at Seton Hall University. All participants were undergraduate students who received course credit for participating in the experiment. For this study 114 participants were recruited.

Of the participants, 79 were women and 35 were men. Fifty-nine of the participants disclosed being single, whereas 55 participants reported being in a relationship at the time of the study. The non-single participants had an average relationship duration of about 21 months. Fifty-one participants were classified as introverts, whereas 63 participants were classified as extroverts.

## **Materials**

### **Five-Factor Model.**

Participants completed the Five-Factor Model (FFM) to assess five dimensions of personality: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Gurven, Von Rueden, Massenkoff, Kaplan, & Lero Vie, 2013). The FFM instrument consists of a stem question followed by a series of 44 characteristics to measure levels of the five personality traits (John & Srivastava 1999).

### **Stimulus Profiles.**

Participants also responded to an experimenter-designed profile. The profiles did not represent any specific individual, but contained language representing low or high commitment level in the partner and characteristics that conveyed partner's I-E type. As can be seen in Appendix A, four profiles resulted: (1) high-commitment extrovert, (2) low-commitment extrovert, (3) high-commitment introvert, or (4) low-commitment introvert. The profiles are based on relationship qualities outlined by Rusbult and colleagues (2009) and Lund (1985), as well as personality qualities described by Sato (2005).

## **Attraction Assessments**

### **Interpersonal Interest.**

Participants answered questions assessing general attraction (Interpersonal Interest) based on information in the stimulus partner's profile. Items measured participants' extent of agreement with the statements it contains. This scale has been found to typically have a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93 (Montoya & Horton, 2004), and 0.94 in the current study.

### **Romantic Interest.**

Participants also answered questions on potential romantic interest in response to the hypothetical partner's profile. Items will measure desirability of, feeling toward, and romantic interest in the stimulus partner. The scale has a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 (Campbell, 1999), with 0.85 in the current study.

### **Commitment Potential.**

Additionally, participants answered experimenter-designed questions adapted from Rusbult and colleagues (2009), Lund (1985), and Sato (2005) to determine their likelihood of committing to a relationship with the hypothetical partner. These items appear in their entirety in Appendix B.

### **Procedure**

Each participant entered a standard classroom setting with other participants, not interacting, but prepared to complete the study independently. The experimenter's instructions stated that the study was designed to investigate psychological factors that relate to people's relationship interests. After the instructions and consent forms were administered, participants first completed a 10-minute survey assessing their own I-E type.

Once the personality questionnaire was completed, participants redirected their attention to a randomly assigned profile asking whether they would be interested in developing a non-platonic relationship with the stimulus person portrayed in their profile. The profile judgment task took approximately an additional 10 minutes to complete. Participants were debriefed as a group once everyone had completed this task.

## **Design**

The design of this study is a 2 (Partner Introversion-Extroversion) x 2 (Partner's Relationship Style: Low vs. High Commitment) x 2 (Participant Introversion-Extroversion) experiment. This design allows for an assessment of the effects of the variables alone (main effects) and in combination with each other (interaction effects). Although a three-way interaction is predicted, analyses examines any potential relationships among predictor and criterion variables, including any higher-order interactions and main effects.

## Results

A three-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to examine the relationships between the participant I-E, I-E similarity of partner, and hypothetical commitment (relationship type) on each of the attraction criterion variables. The procedure determined whether the variability of the dependent variables was accounted for by the independent variables. Multiple comparisons were conducted through analyses with a variety of effect sizes. The predicted three-way interaction was not significant for interpersonal interest ( $F(1,113) = 0.67, p = 0.797, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.001$ ), romantic interest ( $F(1,113) = 0.002, p = 0.963, \text{partial } \eta^2 < 0.001$ ), or commitment potential ( $F(1,113) = 0.014, p = 0.906, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.001$ ), all very small effects. Comparison results of this MANOVA are summarized in Table 1 for each criterion variable. Means and standard deviations for the three dependent variables interpersonal interest, romantic interest, and commitment potential appear in Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

There was a significant main effect of partner I-E similarity on interpersonal interest,  $F(1,113) = 4.67, p = 0.033, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.042$ , romantic interest ( $F(1,113) = 5.83, p = 0.017, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.052$ ), and commitment potential,  $F(1,113) = 4.24, p = 0.042, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.039$ , all medium effect sizes. This suggests that the similarity, or dissimilarity, of partners to the participants, on average, positively impacted participants' attraction and desire.

Table 1.

*Multivariate Effects*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<b>Interpersonal Interest</b>				
Hypothetical Commitment	1	24.78	< 0.001*	0.19
Participants' I-E Similarity	1	0.003	0.96	< 0.001
	1	4.77	0.03*	0.04
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E	1	0.13	0.72	0.001
Hypothetical Commitment × Similarity	1	0.16	0.69	0.001
Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	1.94	0.17	0.02
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	0.07	0.80	0.001
<b>Romantic Interest</b>				
Hypothetical Commitment	1	69.93	< 0.001*	0.40
Participants' I-E Similarity	1	0.37	0.55	0.003
	1	5.83	0.02*	0.05
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E	1	0.54	0.47	0.005
Hypothetical Commitment × Similarity	1	< 0.001	1.00	< 0.001
Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	4.88	0.03*	0.04
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	0.002	0.96	< 0.001
<b>Commitment Potential</b>				
Hypothetical Commitment	1	75.41	< 0.001*	0.42
Participants' I-E Similarity	1	0.51	0.48	0.005
	1	4.24	0.04*	0.04
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E	1	0.14	0.71	0.001
Hypothetical Commitment × Similarity	1	0.29	0.60	0.003
Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	1.82	0.18	0.02
Hypothetical Commitment × Participants' I-E × Similarity	1	0.01	0.91	< 0.001

\* Represents significant findings.

Table 2.

*Means and Standard Deviations for Interpersonal Interest*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	
				<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<b>Introverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	11	27.09	5.07	23.68	30.50
High Commitment	11	31.91	3.75	29.39	34.43
Similar					
Low Commitment	17	28.24	4.58	25.89	30.59
High Commitment	12	32.00	4.22	29.32	34.68
<b>Extroverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	12	26.42	4.32	23.68	29.16
High Commitment	16	30.25	3.45	28.41	32.09
Similar					
Low Commitment	18	29.39	4.12	27.34	31.44
High Commitment	17	33.00	4.18	30.85	35.15

Table 3.

*Means and Standard Deviations for Romantic Interest*

				95% CI	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Lower Bound</i>
<b>Introverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	11	12.00	5.51	8.30	15.70
High Commitment	11	18.73	3.50	16.38	21.08
Similar					
Low Commitment	17	12.12	3.84	10.15	14.09
High Commitment	12	18.92	3.66	16.60	21.24
<b>Extroverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	12	10.42	3.83	7.99	12.85
High Commitment	16	16.13	3.81	14.10	18.16
Similar					
Low Commitment	18	13.89	4.09	11.86	15.92
High Commitment	17	19.53	2.90	18.04	21.02

Table 4.

*Means and Standard Deviations for Commitment Potential*

				95% CI	
				<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Lower Bound</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<b>Introverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	11	18.64	6.30	14.41	22.87
High Commitment	11	27.64	5.09	24.22	31.06
Similar					
Low Commitment	17	19.71	4.87	17.21	22.21
High Commitment	12	27.92	4.38	25.14	30.70
<b>Extroverts</b>					
Dissimilar					
Low Commitment	12	16.92	4.87	13.83	20.01
High Commitment	16	25.44	4.68	22.95	27.93
Similar					
Low Commitment	18	20.78	5.31	18.14	23.42
High Commitment	17	28.06	4.39	25.80	30.32

The main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between participant I-E and I-E similarity of partner for the dependent variable, romantic interest ( $F(1,113) = 4.88$ ,  $p = 0.029$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.044$ ), a small-to-medium effect. As displayed in Figure 1, on average, extroverts rated a similar other higher than a dissimilar other romantically, while introverts did not show a clear liking, according to this dimension. In other words, introverts tended to like dissimilar others more so than extroverts when rating their romantic interest.

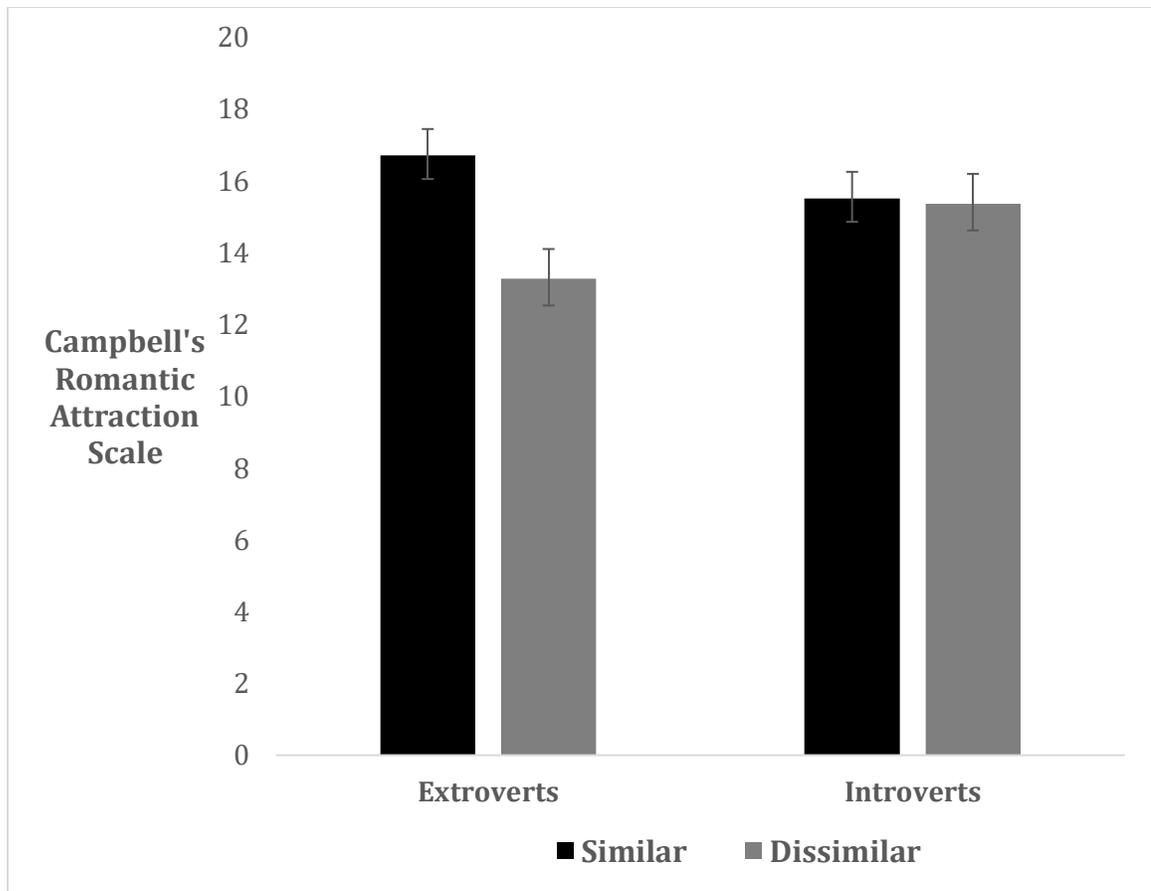


Figure 1. The Effect of Personality on Romantic Interest. Error bars represent standard error.

There also was a significant main effect of the commitment manipulation in the hypothetical partner profile for all three indicators of attraction and interest. The results were as follows: interpersonal interest,  $F(1,113) = 24.78, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.189$ ; romantic interest,  $F(1,113) = 69.93, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.397$ ; and commitment potential,  $F(1,113) = 75.41, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.416$ , produced large effect sizes. These findings suggest that the commitment level of the stimulus partners, on average, positively influenced participants' ratings of their interest in and potential to commit to the profiled partner.

## Discussion

The factors that may influence relationships are almost limitless. The purpose of this study was to investigate a central personality factor within the context of major theories of attraction. Much is known, for example, about Introversion-Extroversion (I-E), but its effects on attraction and relationships have largely been unclear. The focus on I-E within this theoretical context is innovative and may help to clarify the role of personality factors in attraction and relationship development. Overall, the results shed some light onto the desire and attraction among similar and dissimilar others.

The main prediction (expectation) of an interaction between participants' I-E, similarity, and hypothetical commitment level on interpersonal interest, romantic interest, and commitment potential was not supported. It had been expected that extroverted participants would respond more positively to a similar other across all three attraction dependent variables when considering a long-term relationship, but a dissimilar partner for a short-term commitment. On the other hand, it was expected that introverted participants would rate a dissimilar other more favorably all three criterion variables, regardless of the likely duration of the relationship. This pattern of results did not emerge, however. Some of the variables included in the hypotheses were found to be important, but not in the specific combinations and ways that had been expected. Overall, the configuration of significant effects suggests that these factors may be importantly related to partner ratings of attraction, but not precisely as hypothesized. Commitment level of the partner did not make a difference in the positivity of ratings of similar or dissimilar others on I-E. Instead, it was found that extroverts liked and were more attracted to extrovert partners across the board. Introverts, on the other hand, rated both I-E similar and

dissimilar partners evenly, regardless of type of relationship.

### **Similarity Theory**

The main effect of similarity on all three dependent variables corroborates the research on the similarity theory and assortative mating. Though people may desire different characteristics across different mates (Buss, 2016), similarity often overshadows any desired differences through relationship commitment. If people are serious about establishing companionate love and consummate love, with long-term intentions (Sternberg, 1986), then people will feel better suited with someone who is similar across many characteristics (Youyou et al., 2017). The similarity of individuals must always be part of the conversation if we are talking about how relationships are formed.

The significant interaction of similarity and participants' I-E on romantic interest in extrovert participants partially supports similarity theory, in that extroverts evaluated extrovert partner profiles more positively, on average, than the introvert profiles. However, there was no significant similarity effect among introvert participants, who rated both introvert and extrovert profiles uniformly, on average. Extroverts did not react favorably in their ratings of partners who were different to them on this dimension, while introvert participants seemed less selective in their ratings.

### **Complementarity Theory & Self-Expansion Model**

The other half of this same significant interaction revealed that participants classified as introverts did not show significant similarity effects. The introverted participants' attraction ratings for extroverts were almost as positive as their ratings for other introverts: This is consistent with research on the dissimilar desires of introverts (Agarwal & Kumar, 1978). Introverts, in this case, appear to provide credence to both

complementarity theory and the self-expansion model because extrovert characteristics are seen as societally desirable, and introverts often like to engage with people who have such characteristics in an effort to acquire those qualities themselves.

It is important to note that the fact that there was variability in the participant ratings of introverted and extroverted partners, suggests that one theory of attraction does not apply to everyone. If similarity theory was the only valid perspective, people would never choose a dissimilar other romantically, yet they do. Conversely, if complementarity theory and the self-expansion model were the only basis for romantic desire, people would not have shown any evidence of the similarity principle in their responses.

### **Commitment**

The main effect of commitment level portrayed in the stimulus profile on all three dependent variables was revealing. Participants liked better, were more interested in, and would be more willing to commit to someone who also showed signs of wanting to commit to a relationship, more so than to those who characteristically did not want to commit. Specifically, most participants rated lower, were not interested in, or were not willing to commit to someone who showed signs of resisting commitment.

Interestingly, this may mean that participants evaluated their profile in terms of a potential long-term relationship, even if the profile represented a partner seeking a short-term relationship. If some participants were premeditatedly seeking to form short-term relationships, they should have consistently demonstrated low commitment potential to the partner profile, regardless of commitment level portrayed. To do otherwise would demonstrate a willingness to commit to a partner who is unlikely to reciprocate that commitment. Based on this finding, although individuals tend to form short-term

relationships initially, they seem to enter into these with long-term intentions.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Over the process of formulating, conducting, and analyzing this research it became clear that attraction and desire need to be studied with a more expansive framework by combining theories of attraction and relationships, as was accomplished in this study. A major strength of the study is the empirically based selection of the dependent variables. Interpersonal interest, romantic interest, and commitment potential were chosen, because there is evidence suggesting their importance in intimate relationships (Campbell, 1999; Lund, 1985; Montoya & Horton, 2004; Rusbult et al., 2009; Sato, 2005). The results on these criterion variables provided a sense of the relationship dynamic and behavior the participants would exhibit outside of this experimental setting. Also, these results may indicate that the dependent variables are not simply explanations for the characteristics of a relationship, but may represent steps in the process of relationship formation. The pattern of findings seems to suggest that people first establish interpersonal interest, which may lead to romantic interest, and ultimately relationship commitment, in order to transition from the perspective of mate preference to mate selection.

Another strength of the study is its robust theoretical foundation. The long history of relationships research has identified important variables, and has produced well-documented support for its theories, which served as the basis for this study. The extensive literature investigating reasons people may be interested in similar and dissimilar others incorporates similarity, complementarity, and self-expansion.

A limitation of the study is the amount of information contained in the stimulus profiles themselves. Short profiles were created for two purposes: to avoid participant

fatigue in response to an extensive, detailed descriptions, and to reduce the likelihood of biasing participants' evaluations. However, it is possible that the profile descriptions may not have been detailed enough to sufficiently engage participants. Participants may not have seen enough of themselves in the descriptions to activate the processes of the reinforcement affect model (Clore & Byrne, 1974), in which similarity is an important factor. Regarding complementarity theory, research suggest that the major factor driving this theory is sexual preference (Dejong & Reis, 2014; 2015), which may not even have been considered by participants given the brief description. They may have barely had an idea about who the partner was, let alone think of sexual attraction to the person. In context of the self-expansion model, the desire to grow by incorporating desired characteristics of the other, not apparent in oneself, motivates liking for a dissimilar other (Aron & Aron, 1997). It is possible that participants simply did not see a specific quality wanted to obtain given the minimal information contained in the partner profile.

Another limitation of the study is the lack of physical representations given to the participants. The intention was to attempt to look at these factors absent of the influence of physical appearance, but of course, this is not representative of actual social interactions. It may be difficult for people to show interest in, or think of committing to someone they cannot see.

Speed-dating studies provide a close parallel to the present study (Asendorpf, Penke, & Back, 2011; Castro & de Araujo Lopes, 2011; Gerlach, Arslan, Schultze, Reinhard, & Penke, 2017; Goetz, 2013; Li et al., 2013). In speed-dating studies, participants interact with an actual person, or facial image of a person complemented with a description, to assess whether they are interested in that person. Participants in this study may have

needed physical, or sexual, appeal to induce desire and attraction. For example, would an extrovert like an introvert more, if that introvert was physically appealing to them? The current design did not provide participants that opportunity. Though the objective was to control for effects of physical attractiveness, realistically, it cannot be ignored in the context of intimate relationships.

### **Future Directions**

It would be ideal to address the strengths and limitations mentioned here in a consequent study. A future study might also investigate whether individuals who are involved in an existing relationship have partners who reflect their ratings on the partner profile. Would those individuals who are not then in an existing relationship end up with someone who does reflect their desired ratings? The relationship status of participants this sample was not a factor in the design , so no definite predictions or conclusions about the effects of relationship status can be made.

Even with those limitations in mind, it would be interesting to conduct a replication of this study to see if it produces consistent results. According to Gangstead and Simpson's (2000) concept of strategic pluralism, people's preferences for short-term and long-term relationships may depend upon situational factors. It is possible that this investigation may have produced an inadvertent, situational confound, due to the fact that participants responded in a group setting. This may have inadvertently produced socially desirable responses on partner ratings. Another researcher's efforts, perhaps with a similar methodology, might produce other results. With two sets of data, results can be compared, and sample comparison analyses conducted. This would likely increase the external validity of this research. The predictions of this study seem to have some merit, as they

were partially supported, so that reproducing this experiment may have some merit too.

## **Conclusions**

The findings of this experiment demonstrate support for both the liking of similar and dissimilar others, contingent on situational factors. As peoples' circumstances and needs change, so can their liking and attraction to different kinds of partners. Exploring whether this is ambivalence in relationship choice and goals, or represents a development of preferences can help researchers understand relationships more clearly. It is possible that birds of feather flocking together can coexist with the idea that opposites attract.

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## Appendix A

**Stimulus Profile:** Based on Lund (1985), Rusbult et al (2009), and Sato (2005)

### **Instruction to Participants**

Your task is to read this description of a hypothetical other person. You should imagine this person as someone whom you might consider as a romantic partner. The gender of this person is not specified, but you can assume "Person X" is of the gender you are attracted to romantically. You will be asked some questions about this person after you read this description. Please take your time to read through this profile carefully.

### **Extrovert**

I think of myself as active and spontaneous, and I like to take the initiative in my everyday life to meet people and try lots of new things and experiences. I guess you could say I like action and excitement; I like to be on the go most of the time.

### **High Commitment**

When it comes to romantic relationships, I believe in talking freely with my partner, no matter what our personal differences may be. I think it's important to share your feelings, problems, and beliefs with your partner, otherwise there may be problems. I also get super involved in my relationships, and I do everything I can to make them last. And when I'm with someone, there is no chance at all that I would become involved with another person.

### **Introvert**

I think of myself as a little quiet and shy; I tend to be kind of reserved in my everyday life and don't always feel comfortable meeting new people, or trying new things. I guess you could say that I don't really like getting out of my comfort zone. I enjoy being around other people and doing things with them sometimes, but I'm also fine just doing my own thing.

### **Low Commitment**

When it comes to romantic relationships, I believe that partners should not necessarily tell each other everything. I think it's important to keep some mystery going. My partner doesn't need to know all my feelings, problems, and beliefs; that can cause problems. I like to keep things casual, and take my relationships a day at a time. I try not to worry too much about how long a relationship might last. I like to keep my options open when it comes to relationships.

Appendix B

**Commitment Potential:** Based on Lund (1985), Rusbult et al (2009), and Sato (2005)

**It's hard to know based on this brief description, but please try to rate the degree to which you would:**

*(Circle the number that best represents your response to each item.)*

Be interested in going out with/dating this person.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Be interested in a committed relationship with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Share important personal information with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Feel comfortable introducing this person to your family.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Be willing to encourage and emotionally support this person.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Be interested in having this person around your friends.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

Try to take part in activities with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Neutral	Very likely	Extremely likely

## Appendix C

### Demographic Information

1. My gender is \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you currently in a relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
3. **IF** you are currently in a relationship, what is the approximate duration of this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_