WHO AM I IN IT FOR?

RELATIONSHIP GOALS AS PREDICTORS OF RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

by

Benjamin W. Hadden

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with Distinction.

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Research by Crocker and Caneverllo (2008) has investigated two types of relationship goals – compassionate goals to support others and self-image goals to maintain desired images of the self. In their examination of roommate pairs, high self-image goals were associated with partners’ perceiving less support in the relationship. The current study examines how these goals function in romantic relationships. At Time 1, 45 heterosexual couples completed measures of compassionate and self-image goals, relationship satisfaction, and relationship need satisfaction. At Time 2 (4 weeks later), participants completed a satisfaction measure. Given the interdependence of the data (Kenny, 1995), a series of multilevel random coefficient modeling analyses revealed that both self and partner compassionate goals were predictive of Time 1 relationship need satisfaction. Relationship goals were also found to be predictive over time, as Time 2 satisfaction was related to partner compassionate goals. These results suggest that people’s compassionate goals for their relationships have implications for their own relationship quality as well as for their partner’s relationship quality, and that goals may affect relationship functioning over time.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Countless movies, novels, songs, and other forms of popular culture have questioned the nature of the satisfying relationship. Internet sites have sprung up over the past decade with the sole intention of matching compatible individuals hoping to find a fulfilling relationship. It seems that our world today is filled with industries based entirely around determining which partners will make us happy and which ones will not. Yet despite the focus of the social consciousness, there is still much uncertainty concerning what makes a good relationship.

Research into this question has begun to give us some answers, clarifying what it is we look for in a relationship. For instance, a satisfying relationship has been shown to fulfill one's psychological needs (LaGuardia, Ryan, Couchman & Deci, 2000) and the role of attachment styles in giving and receiving support has been linked to satisfaction levels (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Collins & Feeney, 2004). However, despite the influence that goals --the mental representation of a desire-- have over much of our behavior (Austin & Vancouver, 1996) and mental well-being (Crocker & Park, 2004), the literature examining the link between relationship goal orientations and satisfaction remains
scarce. This paper hopes to fill some holes left in our knowledge of relationship goals as we study their effect on relationship quality.

**Relationships and Well-being**

Human beings are, by nature, social creatures. From an early age humans depend on relationships to give them a sense of safety and security, helping to create a sense of self-worth for the individual (Ainsworth, 1979). As such, humans are motivated by a “need to belong,” readily seeking out relationships while hesitantly dissolving established social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The importance of this need is highlighted by Deci & Ryan’s (1985) claim that relatedness is one of the three basic needs of human beings (along with autonomy and competence). Further research has confirmed this, as day-to-day emotional well-being is determined by how well one's needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence are met (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2000). The need to belong is even strong enough to influence memory—when this need goes unmet it results in greater recall for socially relevant material (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000).

To be denied social interaction and support at a young age can lead to many maladaptive problems throughout one’s lifetime. Classic work by Harlow, Dodsworth, and Harlow (1965) showed that the isolation of infant monkeys left them emotionally stunted, reducing their primary reaction to fear. This is applicable to human children as well, as inconsistent or neglectful behavior by parents often leads to insecure
attachment styles in infants who exhibit higher levels of anxiety in social situations (Ainsworth, 1979). Infant attachment styles are not only important in our early-life experience. They have been shown to have long-term effects, remaining moderately stable from infancy through at least the first 19 years of life (Fraley, 2002).

Consistent social interaction remains important even in adulthood, being necessary for good emotional and physical health. Workers in isolated and stressful work environments are at a much higher risk for cardiovascular disease than their more socially collaborative counterparts (Johnson, Hall, & Theorell, 1989). Social rejection has also been demonstrated to result in increased aggression toward others (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001) as a result of the belief that others are “less human” (Bastian & Haslam, 2010).

**Effects of Maladaptive Relationships**

Despite the human need for belongingness, the positive effects of relationships cannot simply be taken for granted. Research has shown a distinct difference between the consequences of adaptive versus maladaptive relationships. Troubled relationships and disagreements have been shown to cause an increase in stress and depression similar to the effects of social isolation. Couples in disagreements or fights showed higher levels of stress, most likely because their usual source of social support (their partner) is seen as opposing them (Gunlicks-Stoesel & Powers, 2009). The stress induced by maladaptive relationships also increases one's risk of depression (Gunlicks-
Stoesel & Powers, 2009). This research is further supported by the finding that married women with low marital satisfaction report worse health than those satisfying marriages (Thomas, 1995).

Collins and Feeney (2000) found that those with insecure attachment styles are less capable of seeking support from partners and worse at providing support to their partners. Partners in this study who received less support in turn reported lower relationship satisfaction in the relationship. This study points to the role that individual differences among relationship partners plays on perceptions of the relationship.

Another study done by Collins and Feeney (2004) focused more specifically on the effect of relationship experience as a function of partner differences in attachment dimensions. This study asked individuals to perform a stressful task and for their partner to send them a message of support afterwards. Results showed that insecure personalities perceived less support from their partner even after controlling for expectations and quality of message. These studies have pointed out factors involved in lowering satisfaction, but still have had little to say about forming a positive relationship.

**Goal Influence**

Goals can be defined as an internal representation of a desired outcome (Austin & Vancouver, 1996) and provide a possible determinant in satisfying relationships, having been shown to be an important psychological construct in well-being and need
fulfillment. For instance, self-esteem goals (that is, the desire to have high self-esteem) have been shown to prevent the building of self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2004). The same study also showed self-esteem goals to be detrimental to need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985), with relatedness suffering due to the focus on the self rather than others.

More specific to the current study, the work on goal orientations has been applied to relationship quality, showing that attachment styles are not the only individual difference factors that are important regarding satisfaction in relationships. Research has shown that incompatible goals between partners can result in conflict (Fincham & Beach, 1999), and conversely, that progress toward mutual goals in relationships results in higher relationship satisfaction (Avivi, Laurenceau, & Carver, 2009).

Crocker and Canevello (2008) identified two types of relationship goals: self-image (ego) and compassionate (eco) goals. Self-image goals produce behavior based around the idea of making oneself look good (i.e., I pay for dinner so my friend thinks I am a nice person). Compassionate goals, however, focus on making others happy for their own sake (i.e., I pay for dinner because I know it will make my friend happy).

Crocker and Canevello’s (2008) study examined roommate satisfaction and perceived support across goal orientations. They organized their study so that the effects of both Actor and Partner goal orientations on Actor perception of support could be measured.
Interestingly, they found that both goal orientations produced similar behavior (i.e., taking out trash) but that roommates perceived these acts differently. Even though both goal-orientations motivated similar pro-social behavior in these relationships, individuals reported feeling less close to and receiving less support from a self-image oriented roommate than those who were living with a roommate motivated by compassionate goals. Again, these results point to the importance of partner individual differences in relationship experience. It should be noted, however, that the past work by Crocker and Canevello (2008) on the influence of compassionate and self-image goals...
on relationships has focused on roommates and has yet to be extended to romantic relationships.

**Overview of Present Study and Hypotheses**

The present study seeks to expand the research on goal orientations into the domain of romantic relationships, examining the influence of goals on romantic relationship quality. We use the same basic model shown above when analyzing our results, that is, the analysis uses both Actor and Partner independent variables to predict various aspects of the Actor’s perception of relationship quality. We also included a longitudinal aspect to this study, a Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaire spaced four weeks apart, to test the temporal effects of relationship goals on relationship quality.

Because need satisfaction has been shown to be a significant factor in well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985), we examine how relationship goals matter in satisfying one's relationship needs. Here we predicted that self/actor self-image goals will result in less need satisfaction. We also suspected that one's partner's self-image goals would influence actor need satisfaction in the same direction. Relatedness is especially predicted to be influenced by goal orientations, as a focus on the self has been shown to hinder this aspect of relationships (Crocker & Park, 2004). We also look at goal orientations as predictors of relationship satisfaction. We predict, in line with Crocker and Canevello (2008), that high actor self-image goals will be related to lower
satisfaction with the relationship, as well as partner self-image goals. Finally, we examine the influence of relationship goals on emotional experiences. Self-image goals are related to poorer relationship quality (Crocker and Canevello, 2008) which leads to distress and negative emotions in the partners (Gunlicks-Stoesel & Powers, 2009). Therefore, we hypothesize higher self-image goals of the actor and partner will be related to more negative emotional experiences in the relationship for the actor.
Chapter 2

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 45 heterosexual couples in self-described committed relationships. Twenty-five of the couples described themselves as “seriously, exclusively dating.” The average length of relationship was 55 weeks (SD = 62.17). The sample was fairly homogeneous in racial make-up, with 78.9% being White/Non-Hispanic.

Measures

Relationship Goals. We created a relationship goals measure based on work done by Crocker and Canevello (2008) (See Appendix B) that was worded for romantic goals rather than roommate goals. This scale measured compassionate, or eco, goals (e.g., “Avoid neglecting my relationship with my partner,” “Be supportive of my partner”) (12 items; \( \alpha = .83 \)) and self-image, or ego, goals (e.g., “Avoid being rejected by my partner,” “Get my partner to acknowledge my positive qualities”) (7 items; \( \alpha = .73 \)). The goals were measured on a 5-point likert-type scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).
**Relationship Satisfaction.** Satisfaction was measured along a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree). To measure satisfaction we used Norton’s (1983) Quality of Marriage Index and adapted (See Appendix C) it for nonmarital romantic relationships (6-items; \( \alpha = .92 \)).

**Five Factor Model of Personality.** The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI: Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003) (See Appendix D) is a 10-item measure of the FFM traits of personality: neuroticism (\( \alpha = .56 \)), extraversion (\( \alpha = .62 \)), openness (\( \alpha = .49 \)), conscientiousness (\( \alpha = .39 \)), and agreeableness (\( \alpha = .24 \)). Participants responded to each item using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale (1 = disagree strongly, 5 = agree strongly).

**Need Satisfaction.** The 9-item Partner Perception Scale (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000) (See Appendix E) was used to measure the participants' perceived levels relationship need satisfaction ("When I am with my partner I..."). The scale measured relationship autonomy ("I feel free to be who I am") (3 items; \( \alpha = .48 \)), competence ("I feel very capable and effective") (3 items; \( \alpha = .51 \)), and relatedness ("I feel loved and cared about") (3 items; \( \alpha = .62 \)). The scale used a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Self-Esteem.** Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg’s (1965) (See Appendix F) 10-item Self-Esteem Scale, which employed five-point response scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (\( \alpha = .92 \)).

**Attachment.** The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale – Revised (ECR-R: Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) (See Appendix G) is a 36-time measure of one’s
feelings of relationship avoidance (“I am nervous when partners get too close to me”) \( (\alpha = .91) \) and anxiety (“I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me”) \( (\alpha = .92) \). Participants responded to each item using a 7-point scale \( (1 = \text{strongly disagree}, 7 = \text{strongly agree}) \).

**Emotional Experiences.** A list of emotions (See Appendix H) was factor analyzed into four measures of emotional experiences in relationships; Relational Depression (10 items; \( \alpha = .82 \)) (e.g., worthless, isolated), Engagement (6 items; \( \alpha = .90 \)) (e.g., trusting, grateful), Responsiveness (7 items; \( \alpha = .92 \)) (e.g., connected, caring), and Dominance (5 items; \( \alpha = .75 \)) (e.g., in control, critical). Participants answered how well each emotion from a given list described their feelings in their relationship. Participants responded to each item using a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited from several undergraduate psychology classes at a large mid-Atlantic university. To be eligible, participants needed to be in a self-defined committed relationship and have a romantic partner who was willing to participate. All couples were compensated by being entered into a raffle for several $25 gift cards to area businesses. Participants from psychology classes were also compensated with extra credit.

Upon their arrival at the lab for their orientation session, the nature of the study was explained to the participants and each member of the couple was randomly assigned an
ID number. This number allowed for anonymity while also allowing us to match the
data of the male and female members of the couple. Males and females were seated
separately, away from their partner. At this time the couples also completed
independently each of the questionnaires mentioned above.

To measure the temporal effects of relationships goals, the participants were
asked to return to the lab four weeks later to fill out another set of questionnaires
regarding their relationship. They were again asked to report on their relationship
satisfaction and emotional experiences.
Chapter 3

Results

In analyzing the data we first examine to what degree the various relationship outcomes and individual differences measures are related to relationship goals (e.g., are compassionate goals related to higher self-esteem). Next, we move into an analysis of the relationship goals as predictors of relationship outcomes using the Actor Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny & Kashy, 2000), explained in more detail below. We will focus first on findings for satisfaction as an outcome, then on the findings for domains of need fulfillment as outcomes, and finally on the findings for emotional experiences as outcomes.

**Individual Differences Related to Compassionate and Self-Image Goals**

The first set of analyses focused on the relationship between the two goal orientations and various individual difference measures. No significant difference between sexes emerged regarding endorsement of compassionate goals (male: $M = 4.02$, $SD = .55$; female: $M = 3.90$, $SD = .64$) or self-image goals (male: $M = 3.17$, $SD = .75$; female: $M = 3.15$, $SD = .76$). Relationship length also failed to show a significant relationship to both compassionate ($r = -.04$) and self-image goals ($r = .02$). We also found that compassionate goals are not significantly related to self-image goals ($r = -.15$).
Compassionate Goals

Compassionate goals were found to correlate with less anxious ($r = -0.27, p = .01$) and avoidant ($r = -0.39, p < .01$) attachment styles and higher levels of self-esteem in individuals ($r = 0.40, p < .01$). Several factors of the Big Five also showed significant associations, with individuals endorsing higher compassionate goals also reporting higher Openness to Experience ($r = 0.29, p = .01$), Agreeableness ($r = 0.34, p < .01$) and Neuroticism ($r = 0.29, p = .01$). Neither Conscientiousness nor Extroversion showed a significant relationship with compassionate goal orientations.

Self-Image Goals

Participants who reported having higher self-image goals had more anxious ($r = 0.42, p < .01$) and avoidant ($r = 0.31, p < .01$) attachment styles. Those participants with high self-image goals also reported lower levels of self-esteem ($r = -0.23, p = .03$). Examination of the Big Five also revealed a negative correlation with Openness to Experience ($r = -0.23, p = .03$) and Agreeableness ($r = -0.25, p = .02$). Neuroticism, Conscientiousness and Extroversion both failed to show significant associations with self-image goals.

Dyadic Analyses

Our data was organized in a nested structure, meaning that level-1 units (individuals) were nested in level-2 units (couples). A statistical consequence of this data
structure is that individuals are not independent from one another. Once a couple was sampled and entered in the study, both male and female partners of each couple were also included. Because of this structure we used the Actor Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny & Kashy, 2000) when analyzing the relationship between the goal orientations and relationship quality. Due to factors such as assortative mating, agreement, and reciprocity, partners within a couple are assumed to have a level of interdependence. The APIM is allows for the modeling of both the effect of actor and partner independent variables on the Actor dependent variable. In order to do this, we analyzed with a series of multi-level random coefficient models with the program, HLM Version 6.06 (Bryk, Raudenbush, & Congdon, 2008). In preparing the data to be analyzed in HLM, a level-1 person level data file was created in SPSS.

The level-1 person level file has variables nested within individuals. That is, the predictor variables include both the responses of the actor and partner members of a couple to predict the dependent variables for each of the partners separately. This allows us to examine if, for example, the satisfaction of the Actor is affected by the goal orientation of both the Actor and Partner on that day. It is possible to determine whether goal orientations have different effects on the individuals, both as a result of their own and their partner's responses.

It is important to note that the following results were produced with all independent variables entered in the model at the same time. Because of this we can
say that the effect of each independent variable represents a unique effect of that variable above and beyond (i.e., controlling for) the other predictors in the model.

Results below are reported as unstandardized \( \beta \)-coefficients which signifies the mean of the dependent variable for all cases in which the independent variable in question deviates by one unit. For example, take the hypothetical relation between affection and empathy in relationships, affection being the independent variable and empathy as the dependent variable. The mean of participants' affection is 2.25 out of a 5-point scale and the \( \beta \)-coefficient for the independent variable, empathy (mean of 3.15), is 0.5. For those participants who reported a level of empathy one unit above the mean, there is a coinciding 0.5 increase in their affection. In this case, those participants whose empathy is one unit above the mean (at 4.15) have a mean level of affection at 2.75.

For the first set of analyses we included a set of eight independent variables: Actor compassionate goals, Actor self-image goals, Actor avoidant attachment, Actor anxious attachment, Partner compassionate goals, Partner self-image goals, Partner avoidant attachment, and Partner anxious attachment. Earlier, we reported the correlation between goal orientations and insecure attachment styles. We chose to include both Actor and Partner attachment styles in the dyadic models as control variables to ensure relationship goals were not simply a product of attachment, but rather were an individual predictor of relationship quality. It is also important to remind the reader that each independent variable was measured at Time 1.
\[ Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} (\text{Actor compassionate}) + \beta_{2j} (\text{Actor self-image}) + \beta_{3j} (\text{Actor anxious}) + \beta_{4j} (\text{Actor avoidant}) + \beta_{5j} (\text{Partner compassionate}) + \beta_{6j} (\text{Partner self-image}) + \beta_{7j} (\text{Partner anxious}) + \beta_{8j} (\text{Partner avoidant}) + r_{ij} \]

**Relationship Satisfaction**

Satisfaction at Time 1 was included in this model as a ninth control variable. As a result, the model above would include \( \beta_9 \) Satisfaction time 1 in the predicting variables. When we ran this model through HLM we found T2 satisfaction was predicted at a statistically significant level solely by Partner compassionate goals (\( \beta = .84, p = .03 \)).
Table 1

*Time 2 Satisfaction Predicted by Goal Orientation and Attachment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Image</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>2.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Image</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 Control</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01.

**Relationship Need Satisfaction**

To examine whether goals affect the degree to which relationships fulfill our needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness), we used the eight variable model described above, running separate models for each of the three needs as the dependent variable.

The only variable to demonstrate a statistically significant link to the autonomy needs outcome was Actor compassionate goals (β = .40, p = .03). The MRCM analysis of competence revealed competence was not significantly predicted by any of the
relationship goals. An analysis of the relatedness needs outcome showed a relationship with Partner compassionate goal orientations ($\beta = .37, p = .02$). In the analysis of relatedness we again see the importance of the compassionate goal orientation of one's partner.

Table 2.

| Time 1 Relationship Need Satisfaction Predicted by Goal Orientation and Attachment |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                  | Autonomy  | Competence | Relatedness   |
| **Predictor**                    | $\beta$   | $t$        | $\beta$      | $t$        | $\beta$ | $t$        |
| **Actor**                        |           |            |               |            |         |            |
| Compassionate                    |           |            |               |            |         |            |
| Actor Compassionate              | .40       | 2.24*      | .29           | 1.89       | .25     | 1.66       |
| Actor Self-Image                 | -.19      | -1.44      | -.09          | -.80       | -.03    | -.27       |
| Actor Avoidant                   | -.16      | -1.28      | -.34          | -3.15**    | -.39    | -3.66**    |
| Actor Anxious                    | -.09      | -.82       | .00           | -.04       | -.01    | -.12       |
| Partner                          | .03       | .19        | .13           | .81        | .37     | 2.48*      |
| Partner Compassionate            |           |            |               |            |         |            |
| Partner Self-Image               | .08       | .61        | -.08          | -.71       | -.13    | -1.09      |
| Partner Avoidant                 | -.14      | -1.07      | -.17          | -1.58      | .00     | -.03       |
| Partner Anxious                  | .03       | .30        | .17           | 1.83       | .10     | 1.04       |

*Note.* $* p \leq .05$, $** p \leq .01$. 
Emotional Experience

For time 1 relational depressed emotion, goal orientations failed to emerge as significant predictors. The Time 2 relational depression analysis included a ninth control variable (Time 1 relational depression) in the model, and again revealed no significant links with goal orientations.

Time 1 relational engagement emotion was predicted by higher Actor compassionate goal orientations ($\beta = .40, p = .01$), and Partner compassionate goals ($\beta = .31, p = .03$). The model for time 2 engagement emotion included time 1 engagement emotion as a control and failed to reveal any significant associations.

The analysis of Time 1 relational responsiveness emotion revealed a relationship between responsiveness and Partner compassionate goals ($\beta = .33, p = .01$). However, a Time 2 analysis (including Time 1 responsiveness as a control) revealed no significant factors in this model.

At Time 1, relational dominance emotion was related to lower Actor compassionate goals ($\beta = -.43, p = .01$), higher Actor self-image goals ($\beta = .30, p = .02$) and higher Partner compassionate goals ($\beta = .37, p = .02$). The Time 2 analysis, using Time 1 dominance as a control, revealed no significance.
Table 3
**Time 1 Emotional Experience Predicted by Goal Orientation and Attachment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Depression β (t)</th>
<th>Engagement β (t)</th>
<th>Responsiveness β (t)</th>
<th>Dominance β (t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor Compassionate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor Self-Image</td>
<td>.10 (1.13)</td>
<td>.00 (-.01)</td>
<td>.12 (1.15)</td>
<td>.30 (2.357*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor Avoidant</td>
<td>.21 (2.78**)</td>
<td>-.25 (-2.49*)</td>
<td>-.22 (-2.39*)</td>
<td>.01 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor Anxious</td>
<td>.00 (.01)</td>
<td>-.06 (-.72)</td>
<td>-.10 (-1.24)</td>
<td>-.02 (-.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Compassionate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Self-Image</td>
<td>-.07 (-.85)</td>
<td>.00 (.04)</td>
<td>-.08 (-.74)</td>
<td>-.11 (-.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Avoidant</td>
<td>.08 (1.11)</td>
<td>-.03 (-.29)</td>
<td>-.03 (-.29)</td>
<td>.10 (.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Anxious</td>
<td>-.07 (-.97)</td>
<td>.00 (-.01)</td>
<td>-.02 (-.29)</td>
<td>-.01 (-.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01.
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

These findings reflect some mixed support for Crocker and Canevello’s (2008) work that highlights the importance of goal orientations as they relate to relationship quality. This study was able to further examine the importance of goal orientations, distinguishing them from adult romantic attachment dimensions as goal orientations remained significant even when attachment was included in the models.

Our original hypotheses were partially supported by the influence of Partner orientations on the Actor’s relationship quality. Perhaps the most interesting part of this finding is that Partner compassionate goal orientations appear to be stronger than that of the Actor’s own goals, as they were related to not only satisfaction, but also predicted autonomy and relatedness. Partner goals were also significant in predicting different emotional experiences (i.e., engagement, responsiveness, and dominance).

However, the hypotheses were not completely supported by the data; the only significant dependent variable that self-image goals were related to was dominance. Even in that model, it was not the only predictor, as compassionate goals also proved to be related. However, this is not to say that relationship goals have nothing to do with relationship quality. In fact, compassionate orientations appear to be quite important in
many of the factors of relationship quality. Those who endorsed compassionate goal orientations were overall in more satisfying relationships. Actor compassionate goals were associated with higher overall satisfaction, a greater sense of autonomy in the relationship, more engagement, as well as lower feelings of dominance over one's partner.

It is unclear what underlies the discrepancy between our findings that point to the importance of compassionate goals and Crocker and Canavello's (2008) findings that largely identified self-image as the driving factor of relationship quality. It does seem possible, however, that the difference lies in the nature of the relationships studied by Crocker and Canavello (2008) being different than the nature of those in our study. Crocker and Canavello studied the platonic relationships between roommate pairs, whereas our study was concerned with the influence of relationship goals on romantic relationship dyads. Perhaps there is some inherent difference between the two types of relationships that would lead to the different findings. We suggest that this difference may be due to the way in which partners were chosen. The roommates were paired without choice in the matter, whereas the romantic couples had the ability to choose their partner. In such a freely chosen relationship, it may be expected that one’s partner be motivated by care and concern for the other. Therefore, when one’s partner lacks this compassionate orientation it is viewed negatively by the Actor.

It is also worth noting that relationship goals measured at Time 1 were predictive of satisfaction at Time 2 (a month later). More specifically, partner compassionate goals
were predictive of satisfaction at Time 2. This seems to suggest that there is longevity to the nature of relationship goals and that it is possible there is a trait dimension to orientations. It also helps to eliminate the possibility that the relationships we found were resultant of spillover effect. For instance, the memory of reporting high satisfaction may influence one’s perception of Actor or Partner goals to match. This longitudinal finding is opposed by the finding that, while goals predicted emotional experiences at Time 1, they failed to hold any significance at Time 2. Perhaps this means that there is a state dimension to goals as well, changing from day to day with situations that were not measured in our study.

Limitations

The nature of this study was correlational, and thus we are unable to make any claims about the true causal relationship between relationship goal orientations and relationship quality. Thus far we have largely talked about compassionate goal orientations as predictors of various aspects of relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction, need fulfillment, etc.) but these links remain unclear and warrant future research attention.

It seems reasonable to argue the possibility that a healthy and positive relationship will increase compassionate goals. The two partners may feel closer to each other due to the positive nature of their relationship and thus feel motivated by a desire to make the other feel good. If this is true, it does not seem likely to be the only
causal direction as relationship length does not appear to influence relationship goals. Relationships on the shorter end of the range reported similar goal orientations as those relationships closer to the upper limit of our range. If goal orientations had no influence on relationship quality one should expect the link between goal orientations and satisfaction early in relationships to be weaker than in more long-term relationships, as satisfaction would over time alter the closeness and caring of partners. Thus, we make the argument that it is reasonable to hypothesize that compassionate goal orientations foster a more supportive relationship that both partner's view as more rewarding and positive.

A third possibility also exists that goal orientations and relationship quality have a feedback effect on each other. That is, compassionate goal orientations lead to feelings of connection and satisfaction. As the relationship is viewed as more satisfying the actors begin to care about their partners' well-being, increasing compassionate goal orientations.

Another limitation of this study is that it is difficult to generalize our findings to more long-term relationships, since the participants used in this study were all college students from a mid-Atlantic university. While over half of the participating couples reported being in “serious and committed relationships,” our population was still largely devoid of long-term relationships such as marriage. Due to the relatively fleeting nature of college relationships, it is possible that goal orientations demonstrate different links
with relationship satisfaction in a more diverse population of more committed relationships, such as marriages.

**Future Directions**

Relationship goal research in the future could focus on more specific aspects of the link between relationship goals and quality. The present study addressed the how goals are related to quality, but the behaviors that are manifested by compassionate and self-image goals which lead to this relationship remain unknown.

Our study also found compassionate goal orientations were related to quality in romantic relationships whereas Crocker and Canevello (2008) found self-image goals were the driving force for roommate relationships. It has been hypothesized that the difference lies in how the partners are chosen (i.e., roommates were assigned whereas romantic partners were selected freely). Future research could examine what is causing the different findings of the two studies.

Goal orientations were shown to have some future predictive power between Time 1 and Time 2, as satisfaction was related to goals from a month prior. Yet it is possible that a state nature of goal orientations change from day to day with situations, reflected by the emotional experiences of individuals. If this is indeed the case, researchers may be interested in possible situations that result in these day to day or situational changes.
Finally, it would be valuable to determine why goal orientations between members of a couple are significantly correlated. This could be a result of seeking out partners who reflect our own goal orientations, or over time is be a tendency for romantic partners to influence each other's relationship goal orientations.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

IRB APPROVAL

Certification of Human Subjects Training

The University of Delaware certifies that Ben Hadden
(Name of researcher)
attended an institutional training session on the use of human subjects in research on
March 25, 2009
(Date)
The session included the following topics:

- The Belmont Report
- Federal regulations for using humans in research (45 CFR 46)
- The University's Federawide Assurance
- Informed consent
- Institutional procedures
- Sources for additional information.

Elizabeth Duggins Peloso
Director of Compliance

Research Office
University of Delaware
Newark DE 19716
302-831-2136
Appendix B: Relationship Goals

CROCKER & CANEVELLO (2008)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond to the following items by using the scale below.

(MIXED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering your relationship over the past two weeks...

In my relationship with my partner, I wanted / tried to . . .

1. Be his/her best friend, closer than anyone else.
2. Get my partner to respect or admire me.
3. Make sure I’m not taken advantage of in any way.
4. Get my partner to do things my way.
5. Demonstrate my intelligence.
6. Get my partner to acknowledge my positive qualities
7. Demonstrate my desirable qualities.
8. Convince my partner that I am right.
9. Avoid revealing my shortcomings or vulnerabilities.
10. Avoid the possibility of being wrong.
11. Avoid showing my weaknesses.
12. Avoid being rejected by my partner.
13. Avoid taking risks or making mistakes in our relationship.
14. Avoid being blamed or criticized.
15. Avoid coming across as unintelligent or incompetent.
16. Avoid appearing unattractive, unlovable, or undesirable.
17. Avoid closing myself off emotionally from my partner.
18. Avoid neglecting my relationship with my partner.
19. Avoid being selfish or self-centered.
20. Avoid doing things that aren’t helpful to me or my partner.
21. Avoid doing anything that would be harmful to my partner.
22. Avoid saying things to my partner that I don’t mean.
23. Have compassion for his/her mistakes and weaknesses.
24. Make a positive difference in his/her life.
25. Be supportive of my partner.
26. Create for him/her what I want to experience myself.
27. Do things that are helpful for both me and my partner.
28. Be constructive in my comments to him/her.
29. Be aware of the impact my behavior might have on my partner's feelings.
Appendix C: Quality of Marriage Index

NORTON, 1983

The following six statements describe different qualities of your relationship. For each statement, please write the number that best reflects your disagreement or agreement with that statement, based on the current quality of the relationship.

Very strong disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Neutral Very strong agreement

1. We have a good relationship.
2. My relationship with my partner is stable.
3. Our relationship is strong.
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.
6. Everything considered, there could not be more happiness in our relationship.
Appendix D: Personality Inventory

GOSLING, RENTFROW, & SWANN, 2003

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I see myself as someone who...

1. Is talkative
2. Tends to find fault with others
3. Does a thorough job
4. Is depressed, blue
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. Is reserved
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. Can be somewhat careless
10. Is curious about many different things
11. Is full of energy
12. Starts quarrels with others.
13. Is a reliable worker
14. Can be tense
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm
17. Has a forgiving nature
18. Tends to be disorganized
19. Worries a lot
20. Has an active imagination
21. Tends to be quiet
22. Is generally trusting
23. Tends to be lazy
24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
25. Is inventive
26. Has an assertive personality
27. Can be cold and aloof
28. Perseveres until the task is finished
29. Can be moody
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. Does things efficiently
34. Remains calm in tense situations
35. Prefers work that is routine
36. Is outgoing, sociable
37. Is sometimes rude to others
38. Makes plans and follows through with them
39. Gets nervous easily
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. Has few artistic interests
42. Likes to cooperate with others
43. Is easily distracted
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature
Appendix E: Partner Perception Scale

LA GUARDIA, RYAN, COUCHMAN, & DECI, 2000

The following items concern your feelings about your romantic partners generally. For each item, please write the number that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree, using the scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel free to be who I am.
2. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel like a competent person.
3. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel loved and cared about.
4. When I am with my romantic partner, I often feel inadequate or incompetent.
5. When I am with my romantic partner, I have a say in what happens and can voice my opinion.
6. When I am with my romantic partner, I often feel a lot of distance in our relationship.
7. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel very capable and effective.
8. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel a lot of closeness and intimacy.
9. When I am with my romantic partner, I feel controlled and pressured to be certain.
Appendix F: Rosenberg 10-Item Self-Esteem Scale

ROSENBERG, 1965

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and characteristics. Please read each statement and consider the extent to which you **typically** and **generally** agree or disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel like a person who has a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel like a failure
4. I feel as if I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel as if I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I take a positive attitude towards myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish that I could have more respect for myself.
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.
11. I am person who generally has high self-esteem.
12. I am person who likes taking risks and seeks out excitement.
Appendix G: Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire

FRALEY, WALLER, & BRENNAN, 2000

Below is a list of statements designed to ascertain how you feel in your relationships generally. For each statement, please write the number that most corresponds to how you feel for each of the 36 statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
1. My partner really understands me and my needs.
2. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
3. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
4. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
5. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
6. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
7. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
8. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
9. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
11. I talk things over with my partner.
12. I worry a lot about my relationships.
13. I tell my partner just about everything.
14. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
15. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
16. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
17. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
18. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
19. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
### Appendix H: Emotional Experience

*OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, when you were with your partner, to what extent did you feel...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Emotional State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Invulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Critical of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Contemptuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Conflicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pressured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Forgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Emphatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Humble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Fallible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Safe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not at all  A little  Somewhat  A lot  Extremely