

of all targets for the variables of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness; thus indicating that these characteristics are generally held in positive regard. The converse is true for neuroticism and the three attachment styles, which are all scored in such a way so that higher scores tend to mean less stable. Additionally, an unexpected pattern may be observed concerning subjects' perceptions of their parents. It was expected that participants' parents would be perceived as relatively positive along the different dimensions being assessed. The results described in Table 1 clearly do not suggest that such idealization existed in the present research. Subjects almost invariably rated themselves more positively than their parents on the different dimensions in addition to rating their parents less positively than their parents rated themselves. Thus, any positive correlations that may be found between subjects' descriptions of their parents and their descriptions of their ideal significant others must not come from participants simply describing both their parents and ideal significant others in absolutely idealized terms. This issue will be discussed in more detail in an ensuing section of the Results section as well as in the Discussion.

Analyses Regarding Primary Hypotheses

In order to address the issue of similarity between significant others (ideal, perceived, and actual) and parents (for same and opposite-sex, both perceived and actual), zero-order correlation and partial correlation analyses will be presented for the Big Five trait variables and for the attachment style variables.

Zero order correlations were performed in order to assess similarity between each of the following pairs: (a) perceived opposite-sex parent and perceived significant other, (b) perceived same-sex parent and perceived significant other, (c) perceived opposite-sex parent and ideal significant other, (d) perceived same-sex parent and ideal significant other, (e) actual opposite-sex parent and actual significant other, (f) actual same-sex parent and actual significant other, (g) actual opposite-sex parent and ideal significant other, and (h) actual same sex-parent and ideal significant other (see Table 3).

These correlation analyses comprise, perhaps, the clearest description of the results obtained in the present research. Across all eight relevant dimensions (the Big Five personality dimensions and the three attachment style dimensions), people perceived their significant others and their ideal significant others to be similar to their opposite-sex parents. Similarly, people perceived their significant others and ideal significant others to be similar to their same-sex parents across these same dimensions. In fact, it appears that subjects perceived more similarity between their same-sex parents and significant others than between their opposite-sex parents and their significant others. Whether these observable differences are actually significant will be discussed in the next section.

Of eight correlations computed between actual significant others' traits and actual opposite-sex parents' traits, four were found to be both positive and significantly different from 0. These specific correlations were for the dimensions of openness ($r(194) = .15, p < .05$), agreeableness ($r(194) = .15, p < .05$), neuroticism ($r(194) = .13,$

TABLE 3
Zero-Order Correlations Between Parents and Significant Others for 5 Personality Variables and 3 Attachment Variables

Correlation between:	Specific Dimension							
	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Anxiety	Dependency	Closeness
Perceived Opposite-Sex Parent and Perceived Significant Other ¹	.28**	.14**	.15**	.12*	.29**	.19**	.26**	.18**
Perceived Same-Sex Parent and Perceived Significant Other ²	.35**	.13*	.28**	.29**	.22**	.21**	.19**	.27**
Perceived Opposite-Sex Parent and Ideal Significant Other ¹	.33**	.15**	.17**	.24**	.30**	.30**	.31**	.26**
Perceived Same-Sex Parent and Ideal Significant Other ³	.38**	.22**	.40**	.41**	.26**	.31**	.32**	.43**
Actual Opposite-Sex Parent and Actual Significant Other ⁴	.15*	-.08	.10	.15*	.13*	-.08	.00	.21**
Actual Same-Sex Parent and Actual Significant Other ⁵	.07	-.06	-.04	.03	-.05	-.08	.05	.08
Actual Opposite-Sex Parent and Ideal Significant Other ⁶	.13*	.13*	.08	-.07	.04	-.05	-.00	.10
Actual Same-Sex Parent and Ideal Significant Other ⁷	.23**	-.01	-.01	.16*	.12	-.01	.05	.10

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ¹ $N = 359$ for Big 5 variables and 516 for attachment variables; ² $N = 282$ for Big 5 variables and 516 for attachment variables; ³ $N = 282$ for Big 5 variables and 280 for attachment variables; ⁴ $N = 194$ for Big 5 variables and 230 for attachment variables; ⁵ $N = 179$ for all variables; ⁶ $N = 212$ for Big 5 variables and 271 for attachment variables; ⁷ $N = 196$ for all variables

$p < .05$), and closeness ($r(194) = .21, p < .01$). These results lend some support to the template matching hypothesis concerning actual similarity between significant others and opposite-sex parents. The next correlation analyses included variables from actual significant others and actual same-sex parents. As subjects tended to perceive that their romantic partners were more similar to their same-sex parents than to their opposite-sex parents, it seems that actual similarity between same-sex parents and actual significant others should be at least as strong as the actual similarity between actual opposite-sex parents and actual significant others. Interestingly, this proposed pattern is not manifest in this correlation matrix: Of eight correlations between actual same-sex

parents and actual significant others, none were significantly different from 0. This particular finding is a bit puzzling and will be addressed in the Discussion section.

Assessing Differences between Correlations

In order to address whether perceived similarity was indeed stronger between same-sex parents and romantic partners (both actual and ideal) than between opposite-sex parents and romantic partners (both actual and ideal), t-tests were conducted using a procedure outlined by Hotelling (1940). Specifically, a t value was obtained for the difference between the correlation between perceived same-sex parent with perceived significant other and the correlation between perceived opposite-sex parent with perceived significant other. Such t's were obtained for all eight dimensions (the Big Five dimensions and the three attachment style dimensions). Of eight t-tests, two were significant. The correlation between perceived same-sex parents' agreeableness and perceived significant others' agreeableness ($r(276) = .29$) was significantly greater than the correlation between perceived opposite-sex parents' agreeableness and perceived significant others' agreeableness ($r(276) = .09$; $t(276) = 2.59$, $p < .01$). Similarly, the correlation between perceived same-sex parents' dependency and perceived significant others' closeness ($r(276) = .27$) was significantly greater than the correlation between perceived opposite-sex parents' dependency and perceived significant others' closeness ($r(276) = .11$; $t(276) = 2.37$, $p < .01$).

Next, t's were obtained for the differences between the correlations between perceived same-sex parent with ideal significant other and between opposite-sex parent and ideal significant other. In this case, perceived same-sex parent was significantly more predictive of ideal significant other than perceived opposite-sex parent for three of the eight dimensions (extraversion ($t(275) = 2.93$, $p < .05$), agreeableness ($t(275) = 2.58$, $p < .05$), and closeness ($t(275) = 2.85$, $p < .05$)).

change to
"dependency"

Partial Correlations

The next series of analyses was designed to assess whether the correlations concerned with perceived similarity described earlier might have resulted from two artifactual sources. First, if subjects perceived their significant others as similar to themselves and perceived their opposite-sex parents as similar to themselves, then any correlations between significant others and opposite-sex parents could result simply from the fact that both are perceived as similar to the self. In addition, if subjects tended to employ the same response biases in completing all of the measures, then positive correlations could result simply from this shared methodology (i.e., having the same subject complete all measures). In order to address both of these points, the correlations of primary interest were re-conducted controlling for subjects' own scores on the variables of interest. For example, a correlation was computed between the perceptions of the significant other and opposite-sex parent on the trait of extraversion partialling out the subject's own score on the extraversion measure. Partialling out the subject's own score should control for both of the possible artifacts described earlier.

In general, the patterns of partial correlations mirrored the patterns of correlations. Most partial correlations were positive and significantly different from 0. For instance, of the eight correlations conducted between perceived significant other and perceived opposite-sex parent controlling for subjects' own scores on relevant variables, seven remained positive and significantly different from 0. For example, the zero-order correlation between perceived significant other and perceived opposite-sex parent for neuroticism was $r(359) = .29$ ($p < .01$) while this same correlation controlling for subjects' self-reported neuroticism scores was $r(355) = .25$ ($p < .01$). These partial correlations indicated that, for the most part, perceived similarity between partners and parents still existed even after controlling for subjects' own scores.

Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regression analyses were performed in order to determine the variables that are most predictive of perceived significant others' characteristics, ideal significant others' characteristics, and "actual" significant others' characteristics. Thus three sets of regression analyses were performed. First, analyses employing variables representing perceived significant other as the dependent variables were conducted. For these analyses, predictor variables included variables representing actual opposite-sex parent, actual same-sex parent, perceived opposite-sex parent, perceived same-sex parent, ideal significant other, actual significant other, and the subject him or herself. Eight such analyses were conducted: one for each of the Big Five traits and one for each of the three attachment styles. In each analysis, a significant amount of variability in the dependent variable was accounted for by the set of predictor variables (R^2 ranged from .28 to .58). Across seven of the eight analyses, the variables representing actual significant other and ideal significant were found to be significant predictors of the dependent variable based on semi-squared partial correlations. For instance, the amount of neuroticism subjects perceived in their partners was significantly predicted by both (a) the degree of neuroticism reported for their ideal significant others and (b) the amount of neuroticism their actual significant others reported themselves (see Table 4). Thus, subjects' perceptions of their partners reflect, to some degree, their actual partners along with their own ideal partners.

Generally, variables representing subjects' parents (both actual and perceived) were not significantly predictive of perceptions of partners. In two cases, the "actual same sex parent" variable was negatively related to the dependent variable after controlling for multicollinearity (see Table 4 for an example).

Next, analyses were performed employing variables representing ideal significant others as dependent variables. For eight such analyses (one analysis for each Big Five trait and one for each of the three attachment styles), predictor variables represented actual opposite-sex parent, actual same-sex parent, perceived opposite-sex parent, perceived same-sex parent, perceived significant other, actual significant other, and the subject him or herself. In each analysis, a significant amount of variability in the dependent variable was accounted for by the set of predictor variables (R^2 ranged from .20 to .64). In seven of these eight regression analyses, variables representing the

TABLE 4
Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Significant Other Neuroticism from Neuroticism of the Following Targets: Actual Opposite-sex Parents, Actual Same-sex Parents, Perceived Opposite-sex Parents, Perceived Same-sex Parents, Ideal Significant Others, Actual Significant Other, and Self-Perceptions

Perceived Significant Others' Neuroticism (DV)				
Targets' neuroticism	B	β	sr^2	t
Actual Opposite-Sex Parent	.07	.06	.01	.85
Actual Same-Sex Parent	-.15	-.14	.01	-1.99*
Perceived Opposite-Sex Parent	.07	.07	.00	.89
Perceived Same-Sex Parent	.09	.10	.01	1.31
Ideal Significant Other	.69	.42	.12	5.71**
Actual Significant Other	.39	.34	.11	5.38**
Primary Subject	-.00	-.00	.00	-.03
Constant	-.20			-.05

$R^2 = .51$
 R^2 (adjusted) = .49
 $R = .71^{**}$

perceived significant others and the subjects' self-perceptions served as significant predictors of the dependent variable based on semi-squared partial correlations. For instance, subjects' ideal significant others' degree of neuroticism was significantly predicted by both their perceived significant others' neuroticism as well as their own self-reported degree of neuroticism. These results indicate that one's ideal partner is, in part, a reflection of his or her self as well as a reflection of his or her own partner. Also, for two of the eight dimensions, variables representing subjects' parents served as significant predictors. Specifically, a significant amount of ideal significant others' agreeableness was predicted by both actual opposite-sex parents' agreeableness and perceived opposite-sex parents' agreeableness. Also, ideal significant others' neuroticism was significantly predicted by both actual same-sex parents' neuroticism and perceived opposite-sex parents' neuroticism. This particular finding implies that our conceptualization of our ideal romantic partners may be somewhat based on our opposite-sex parents in terms of neuroticism.

herself

Finally, regression analyses were performed in order to determine the best predictors of actual significant others. For eight such analyses conducted (one for each Big Five trait and one for each of the three attachment styles), variables representing actual significant others served as dependent variables while variables representing actual opposite-sex parent, actual same-sex parent, perceived opposite-sex parent, perceived same-sex parent, ideal significant other, perceived significant other, and the subject him or herself all served as predictor variables. In each analysis, a significant amount of variability in the dependent variable was accounted for by the set of predictor variables (R^2 ranged from .17 to .45). Across all eight of these regression analyses, subjects' perceptions of their partners on the relevant dimensions accounted for a significant amount of variability in the dependent variable as indicated by semi-squared partial correlations. For instance, subjects' perceptions of their partners' degree of extraversion was significantly related to their partners' self-reported extraversion scores. Thus, to a large extent, people are accurate in describing the personality traits and attachment styles of their romantic partners. Additionally, for the traits of openness and extraversion, actual opposite-sex parents' scores on these dimensions were significant predictors of actual significant others' scores on these same dimensions. Thus, to some extent, characteristics of people's actual parents may independently predict characteristics of their romantic partners.

Sex Differences

As men and women have been found to be differentially attracted to different characteristics in members of the opposite-sex (Buss, 1994) and previous theorists have suggested that mothers are disproportionately influential in affecting the partner choice of both sons and daughters (Winch, 1950), it follows that certain sex differences in template matching phenomena may exist. In order to address any such differences, several zero-order correlations were conducted separately for male and female subjects. First, correlations between perceived opposite-sex parent and perceived significant other were performed separately for males and females. These analyses were conducted for the Big Five personality dimensions. For both males and females, all correlations were positive (suggesting that both males and females perceived their significant others as similar to their opposite-sex parents along these dimensions). The strength of these correlations did not seem to differ between the sexes. For males, these correlations ranged from $r(92) = .14$ to $.29$ whereas for females, they ranged from $r(267) = .13$ to $.29$.

Next, correlations between actual opposite-sex parent and actual significant other were performed separately for males and females. Again, no striking sex differences existed. For males, these correlations ranged from $r(40) = .06$ to $.26$ whereas for females, they ranged from $r(154) = -.13$ to $.17$. If anything, these data suggest that males may be involved with partners who are a bit more similar to their opposite-sex parents than females. However, the relatively small sample size for males makes it impossible to confidently conclude that such a difference exists.

Finally, correlations between perceived same-sex parent and perceived significant

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other were performed separately for males and females. For males, these correlations ranged from $r(42) = .20$ to $.50$ whereas for females, they ranged from $r(154) = .13$ to $.38$. Regarding these analyses, sex differences are not particularly pronounced.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction, as measured by The Relationship Satisfaction Questionnaire (Murray et al., 1996), had a ceiling effect: Slightly more than half of the subjects scored 15 out of 15 (Most satisfied). Thus, in order to split subjects into either the "satisfied" or "unsatisfied" conditions, "satisfied" subjects were defined as scoring 15 out of 15 ($N = 187$) while dissatisfied subjects were defined as scoring less than 13 ($N = 81$).

First, correlations between perceptions of significant others and perceptions of opposite-sex parents were performed. An interesting pattern emerges when the data is analyzed in this way. It seems that satisfied individuals tend to perceive similarity between their partners and opposite-sex parents more than dissatisfied individuals do. For satisfied subjects, the correlations ranged from $r(187) = .07$ to $.27$. Three of these correlations were significantly different from 0. These were for the variables of openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Interestingly, the only significant relevant correlation for the dissatisfied group was for the trait of neuroticism ($r(80) = .39$, $p < .01$). This finding is somewhat intriguing and will be addressed both in the Discussion and later in the Results section.

Next, correlations between actual significant others and actual opposite-sex parents were conducted separately for satisfied and dissatisfied individuals. Interestingly, only one correlation was significant for satisfied subjects (agreeableness, $r(112) = .19$, $p < .05$) while only one correlation, for a different dimension, was significant for the dissatisfied subjects (neuroticism, $r(38) = .28$, $p < .05$). The finding regarding neuroticism is particularly noteworthy. These results suggest that individuals whose partners are similar to their opposite-sex parents in terms of neuroticism tend to be relatively dissatisfied with their relationships. However, this interpretation implies that some subjects (a) have relatively stable (unneurotic) opposite-sex parents, (b) become involved with partners who are similar to their opposite-sex parents on this dimension (i.e., who are also somewhat stable) and (c) are, consequently, dissatisfied with their relationships. This possibility is counter-intuitive.

Concerning the relationship between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction, it seems most plausible that subjects who are involved with neurotic partners would be less satisfied in their relationships than subjects involved with stable partners. In order to address this issue, two between-groups t-tests were performed: one addressing whether satisfied subjects perceive their partners as less neurotic than dissatisfied subjects and one comparing whether satisfied subjects' actual partners are, indeed, less neurotic than dissatisfied subjects' actual partners. Both analyses revealed significant between-group differences. Satisfied subjects perceived significantly less neuroticism in their partners ($M = 27.98$; $SD = 8.22$) than dissatisfied subjects ($M = 33.11$; $SD = 8.74$; $t(272) = 4.65$, $p < .01$). Additionally, satisfied subjects' actual partners reported having

significantly less neurotic tendencies ($M = 29.62$; $SD = 6.87$) than dissatisfied subjects' actual partners ($M = 32.00$; $SD = 8.55$; $t(169) = 1.82$, $p < .05$).

These results and the results concerning concordance between opposite-sex parents and significant others for the trait of neuroticism suggest that dissatisfaction in a relationship may stem from both (a) becoming involved with relatively neurotic individuals and (b) becoming involved with individuals who, other things equal, are relatively similar to one's opposite-sex parent in terms of neuroticism. The implications of these findings will be addressed in the Discussion.

Finally, correlations between perceptions of significant others and perceptions of same-sex parents were performed separately for satisfied and dissatisfied subjects. For the satisfied group, all five relevant correlations were significant and positive, while, for the dissatisfied group, only two correlations were significant and positive. Unlike with the previous two correlation matrices, no noticeable differences were found for the variable of neuroticism ($r(146) = .24$, $p < .01$ for the satisfied group, whereas $r(67) = .25$, $p < .05$ for the dissatisfied group).

In terms of relationship satisfaction, the present results suggest that dissatisfied individuals may perceive slightly less similarity between their opposite-sex parents and significant others overall, while perceiving more similarity for the dimension of neuroticism. Further, actual concordance for the dimension of neuroticism may exist more for dissatisfied individuals than for satisfied individuals. Also, satisfied subjects may perceive more similarity between their same-sex parents and significant others than dissatisfied subjects.

DISCUSSION

The present research was designed to assess the validity of the template matching hypothesis, a hypothesis derived from Freud's (1927) psychoanalytic theory, which proposes that, when choosing a mate, a person unconsciously tries to match a template of his or her opposite-sex parent that was formed early in development. While evidence has been obtained which suggests that people do tend to choose partners who are physically similar to their opposite-sex parents (Jedlicka, 1980, 1984), evidence concerning personality similarity and the template matching phenomenon has not been consistent (Epstein & Guttman, 1984). Indeed, existing research that has attempted to demonstrate that people choose partners who are similar to their opposite-sex parents in terms of personality has exclusively employed personality assessments of the opposite-sex parents and significant others that were made by the subjects themselves. Thus, such research may be tapping a perceptual bias whereby people perceive their significant others to be similar to their opposite-sex parents; regardless of actual similarity.

The present study was designed explicitly to test the template matching hypothesis in addition to certain related hypotheses. In previous research on the template matching hypothesis, subjects have simply been asked to describe both their opposite-sex parents and their significant others along certain dimensions, thus obtaining two sets of data (Wilson & Barrett, 1987; Aron, 1974). The present research obtained these same

two sets of data in addition to six other sets of data including subjects' perceptions of themselves, perceptions of their same-sex parents, conceptualizations of their ideal significant others, and actual data obtained from subjects' significant others, opposite-sex parents, and same-sex parents.

For each of these data sets, individuals were described (either by themselves or by the primary subjects) along five trait dimensions (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and three attachment style dimensions (Collins & Read, 1990). Thus, while the present research design is adequate to address the template matching hypothesis in a similar way as past research, by assessing the degree of similarity between people's perceptions of their romantic partners and perceptions of their opposite-sex parents, the present research also allows for the assessment of several additional questions.

Actual Similarity between Parents and Partners

In terms of actual similarity between subjects' parents and romantic partners, some interesting results were obtained. Of eight correlations that were calculated between actual opposite-sex parents and actual significant others, four (i.e., half) were both positive and significantly different from zero. The specific dimensions for which actual concordance was found were openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and closeness. These dimensions represent a relatively broad range of traits and suggest that, at least to a moderate degree, people do tend to enter romantic relationships with individuals similar to their opposite-sex parents. In other words, to some extent, Freud (1927) was correct in his assertions that individuals choose romantic partners in adulthood who resemble their opposite-sex parents. The present research found this template matching phenomenon to exist for personality variables. While these effect sizes are relatively small, in terms of the extant literature, this finding is novel. Past research on this topic has not administered personality measures to actual parents and partners of subjects.

This finding concerning actual similarity between people's romantic partners and opposite-sex parents may have implications for partner selection as well as for relationship success. For instance, consider individuals who, for a variety of reasons, have relatively poor relationships with their opposite-sex parents. Such individuals may cherish the day that they move out of their parents' homes for good. What would become of these individuals if they became involved with, or even married, people who had very similar personalities as their opposite-sex parents? This scenario brings to mind images of frustration, resentment, unhappy relationships, and divorce. If, as the present research suggests, there is a general tendency for individuals to become romantically involved with persons similar to their opposite-sex parents along several personality dimensions, knowledge of this finding may serve to help guide the partner choice of individuals who have generally negative relationships with their opposite-sex parents. For such individuals, it may be advantageous to seek partners who are discernibly different from their opposite-sex parents in terms of openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and closeness. The correlation found for neuroticism seems a bit counter-intuitive and will be discussed in a later section titled "The Relationship between Relationship Satisfaction and Template Matching Phenomena."

Regarding the issue of the differential importance of same and opposite-sex parents, the current data are somewhat mixed. Of the eight zero-order correlations calculated between actual significant others and actual same-sex parents, none were found to be significantly different from zero. However, concerning perceived similarity between partners and parents, a different story unfolds.

Perceived Similarity between Parents and Partners

Evidence regarding actual similarity between romantic partners and parents suggests that people's partners tend to be similar to their opposite-sex parents along some dimensions. These results further suggest that characteristics of individuals' same-sex parents are unrelated to characteristics of their romantic partners. However, the results bearing on the question of perceived similarity suggest that people perceive their romantic partners as similar to both their opposite and same-sex parents. These results remained apparent even after partialling out subjects' own scores on the dimensions of interest. Thus, across all eight dimensions addressed in the present research, subjects described their romantic partners as similar to both their same and opposite-sex parents. Furthermore, subjects seemed, if anything, to perceive somewhat more similarity between their same-sex parents and significant others than between their opposite-sex parents and significant others.

Perceived Similarity between Parents and Ideal Partners

The results concerning similarity between parents and ideal significant others are quite similar to those relating to similarity between perceptions of parents and significant others. Across all of the different dimensions assessed, subjects perceived both their same and opposite-sex parents as similar to their ideal significant others. In fact, people seemed to perceive more similarity between their ideal significant others and parents than between their actual significant others and parents.

People may perceive similarity between their parents and their ideal significant others partly because their parents may be perceived in generally idealized ways and thus may provide templates for ideal significant others. However, after carefully reviewing the results of the present study, this hypothesis seems only half true. Subjects did, indeed, perceive a significant amount of similarity between their ideal significant others and their parents. However, unexpectedly, subjects' parents were not generally perceived in idealized terms. For instance, subjects' own scores on openness were, on average, higher than both their perceptions of their opposite-sex parents' and same-sex parents' scores, which, in turn, were lower than their opposite-sex parents' self-reports as well as lower than their same-sex parents' self reports. Similar results were found for several other variables.

If subjects in the present study did not, in general, idealize their parents, then why would their perceptions of their parents be so highly correlated with their conceptualizations of their ideal significant others (which are defined as ideal)? It may be that people's conceptualizations of their ideal significant others are based, in part,

on their relatively unidealized perceptions of their parents. Thus, idealized romantic partners represent an interaction of generalized idealized individuals, projections of the self (Murray et al., 1996), and projections of perceived characteristics of both parents. Regardless of whether one idealizes his or her parents, a person's ideal significant other represents characteristics that he or she perceives his or her parents to have. For example, one's ideal significant other is not simply as stable (i.e., unneurotic) as possible, but is relatively stable. Further, that same ideal significant other may be similar to that specific person's parents (as perceived by that person) for the dimension of stability. Based on this reasoning, subjects' ideal significant others do represent their perceptions of their specific parents, regardless of whether they idealize those parents.

The Relationship between Relationship Satisfaction and Template Matching Phenomena

As previously mentioned, the findings from the present research may have implications for how to achieve satisfaction in romantic relationships. The findings concerning relationship satisfaction as a moderator variable are particularly intriguing. Using the Relationship Satisfaction Questionnaire (Murray et al., 1996), subjects were divided into groups representing either high or low satisfaction. Overall, the satisfied individuals tended to perceive similarity between their opposite-sex parents and significant others more than the dissatisfied subjects (i.e., across more dimensions). However, dissatisfied subjects perceived more similarity between their opposite-sex parents and significant others for the dimension of neuroticism. In other words, dissatisfied subjects tended to perceive that their partners were, generally, as neurotic (emotionally unstable) as their opposite-sex parents. It is apparent that such a perception may easily lead to problems in a relationship.

The correlations between actual significant others and actual opposite-sex parents, which were calculated separately for satisfied and dissatisfied subjects, suggest even more about how neuroticism may play a role in determining relationship satisfaction. Of five correlations calculated for satisfied subjects (one for each Big Five dimension), one was significant and positive. Specifically, subjects' actual opposite-sex parents were found to be similar to their significant others for the dimension of agreeableness. Subjects whose partners were roughly as agreeable as their opposite-sex parents seemed happy with their relationships. For dissatisfied subjects, interestingly, subjects' actual opposite-sex parents were found to be similar to their actual significant others for the dimension of neuroticism. Subjects whose partners were, generally, as neurotic as their opposite-sex parents were unhappy with their relationships. Further, these subjects seemed to accurately perceive this similarity in neuroticism.

It seems as though the relationship between an undesirable trait such as neuroticism and relationship satisfaction would simply be that people involved with relatively neurotic partners are less satisfied than individuals whose partners are relatively stable. This hypothesis partially was confirmed in the present research: Subjects who were satisfied with their relationships were involved with less neurotic partners (in terms of

both perception and “actuality”) than subjects who were dissatisfied with their relationships. However, the present findings suggest that, above and beyond this tendency for partner-neuroticism to co-vary with relationship satisfaction, satisfaction is also moderated by the degree to which partners and opposite-sex parents are similar along such dimensions. Perhaps future research could examine the complexities concerning just how template matching phenomena do, indeed, affect relationship satisfaction.

Implications

The present research has implications for many aspects of interpersonal relationships. First, in terms of actual mate selection, the findings provide modest support for Freud's (1927) theory of mate selection. While effect sizes were generally small, these data suggest that along a variety of traits, people may tend to choose romantic partners who are similar to their opposite-sex parents. In light of the empirical evidence presented in the present work, this Freudian notion may not be folklore. This tendency has implications for relationship success and relationship satisfaction.

The present findings do not imply that choosing a romantic partner reminiscent of one's opposite-sex parent is necessarily a recipe for failure. In fact, the subjects in the present research who chose partners similar to their opposite-sex parents on the dimension of agreeableness tended to be most satisfied with their relationships. On the other hand, it seems that becoming involved with a romantic partner who is not only neurotic but is, additionally, similar to one's opposite-sex parent in terms of this trait dimension, may lead to relationship despair.

These results do, however, suggest a mechanism for people to increase their likelihood of finding relationship satisfaction. Recall that dissatisfied subjects not only chose partners who were actually similar to their opposite-sex parents in terms of neuroticism, but that these subjects also perceived this similarity to exist. These findings suggest that people are able to perceive a factor that appears to lead to dissatisfaction in relationships. Being able to perceive such similarity should help people choose partners for whom they are better suited.

The present research also has implications concerning generalized romantic partner perception. It seems clear that people perceive their actual and ideal romantic partners as similar to both their opposite and same-sex parents. Further, this perception exists after controlling for subjects' own personalities. This finding is consistent with the notion of internal working models as described in Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory which suggests that people develop internal working models which help them predict characteristics of relationships. The tendency to perceive one's partner as similar to one's parent(s) may be appropriately characterized as the manifestation of such internal working models. The present research suggests that these internal working models not only guide relationship patterns, but also help color the perceptions people have of others with whom they are involved.

Also, concerning partner perceptions, the present research implies that relatively satisfied individuals are more likely to perceive their partners as similar to their parents than relatively dissatisfied individuals. This finding is consistent with the work of Murray and her colleagues (e.g., Murray et al, 1996) which concentrates on the positive benefits that people gain from holding positive illusions in relationships. Her

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research implies that people who tend to idealize their partners are generally satisfied with their relationships. The present research suggests a parallel process by which people project characteristics of their parents on their partners, feel that they can predict their partners' behavior, and, consequently, are relatively satisfied with their relationships. Such a perceptual phenomenon may allow people to understand their romantic partners as coherent gestalts; what more could one want from a romantic partner?

NOTES

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