

MATCHING SENSORY CHANNELS OF RELATING IN ROMANTIC PARTNERS



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Introduction

- Multidimensionality orientation refers to an orientation of romantic partners toward using multiple sensory channels in relating to each other (Miron, Rauscher, Reyes, Gavel, & Lechner, in press).
- These channels are: touch, sight, hearing, active touch, bodily sensations (warmth, texture, scent), and relating to their partner through an object that reminds them of the person.
- Research has shown that the phrase “birds of a feather flock together” has received support when it comes to relationships (Heine, Foster, & Spina, 2009). People tend to associate with those who are like them (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008).
- We tested if this compatibility in couples continues to be supported when it comes to their importance of and preference for the sensory channels used to relate to one another.
- Thirty-three couples were selected to participate in this study. Each member in the relationship completed a survey in order to compare their responses.

Hypotheses

- There will be a positive correlation between matching sensory channels among partners and their relationship satisfaction.
- The longer the relationship duration, the more similar romantic partners will be in their preference and assigned importance of the sensory channels.

Methods

Participants

Thirty-three couples participated in this study. The ethnicities represented were Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Native American. The participants were recruited through acquaintances and promotion of the study online.

Procedure

Couples were each given a 15-minute survey to complete independently.

Measures

- The **importance** of each sensory channel (9-point scale)
- The **preference** for each channel (9-point scale)

Methods (continued)

- Their **relationship satisfaction** (adopted version of the 7-point Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale)
- Duration** of the relationship

Analyses

- Compute a **matching score** (0-6) by comparing within each couple each partner’s importance and preference of sensory channels
- Correlate **MATCHING IMPORTANCE** score and **relationship satisfaction**
- Correlate **MATCHING PREFERENCE** score and **relationship duration**

Results

- Hypothesis 1 was supported. As seen in Table 1, there was a significant positive correlation between matching importance and relationship satisfaction and a marginally significant correlation between matching preference and relationship satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2 was not supported (correlations were not significant, as shown in Table 1).

Table 1: Correlation between satisfaction and duration of the relationship and matching sensory channels of relating.

	Satisfaction	Duration
Satisfaction	1	.40*
Duration	.40*	1
Matching Importance	.52**	.14
Matching Preference	.34†	-.03

**p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10, 2-tailed

Additional Analyses

Table 2: Correlation between importance and preference for each sensory channel and relationship satisfaction.

	Importance	Preference
Touch	.15	.33†
Visual	.42*	.10
Bodily Sensations	.34†	.41*
Hearing	.02	.27
Substitution	.33†	-.08
Active Touch	.09	.16

**p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.10, 2-tailed

Additional Analyses (continued)

- Additional correlation analyses were run to explore the relationship between preference for and importance of EACH sensory channel and satisfaction (see Table 2).
- The data underscore the importance of the visual and body feel channel.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Although Hypothesis 2 was not supported, Hypothesis 1 supported. Specifically, couples with a **higher similarity on importance of and preference for multidimensionality orientation** have a greater relationship satisfaction

Additional analyses suggested that:

- Couple members’ compatibility in their **importance of the visual channel** is important with respect to their relationship satisfaction
- Couple members’ compatibility in their **preference for the body sensations channel** is important with respect to their relationship satisfaction

Future research should investigate romantic partners’ compatibility in the day-to-day use of sensory channels.

References

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