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Implicit Theories of Relationships: Prediction of Dating Strategies and Relationship Initiation

By

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Honors Thesis

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Abstract

The present study aimed to merge research on initial attraction and implicit theories of relationships by examining how beliefs about relationships influence dating strategies. Research has examined role of implicit theories in the functioning of existing relationships but there is much room for growth in the area of initial attraction and dating strategies. Results revealed that destiny theory (theory that relationships are either meant to be or not) predicted increased likelihood of internet dating, a lower frequency of dating, and dating to avoid loneliness and missing opportunities. Growth theory (theory that relationships improve by cultivation and development) predicted dating to develop safety and security. Growth and destiny beliefs predicted increased similarity preference and dating for true love.

Implicit Theories of Relationships: Assessment and Prediction of Dating Strategies and Relationship Initiation

Imagine you are a single young man shopping at the local grocery store. While in the checkout line, you catch an attractive woman smiling and glancing at you. How likely are you to approach this woman and take the risk of asking for her phone number? How likely are you to try internet dating instead? The answers to these questions are significant because taking risks is an inevitable factor in the initiation of relationships and involvement in healthy relationships is important for maintaining well being (Hendrick, 2006). Whether or not you initiate a relationship may be influenced by your beliefs, or implicit theories, about the nature of relationships. Generally speaking implicit theories are information structures that determine whether certain characteristics are permanent or malleable.

Most research on implicit theories began with a focus on how beliefs about the malleability of intelligence influence performance in an academic setting. In an academic domain, an entity theorist believes that intelligence is fixed and cannot be changed; whereas an incremental theorist believes that intelligence is mutable. The variation in these beliefs leads to different goals and motivational strategies in academic settings. Researchers have found that entity theorists are more focused on grades and performance, make more external attributions for failure, and cope negatively with setbacks. In contrast, incremental theorists are more focused on learning goals and cope more effectively following setbacks including making more adaptive attributions (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

A rapidly expanding literature has recently extended implicit theories to the domain of relationships also revealing differences in motivation. In the field of relationships the two types of theories are destiny and growth beliefs. Knee (1998) asserts that “a belief in destiny holds that

potential relationship partners are either meant for each other or not. A belief in growth holds that successful relationships are cultivated and developed” (p. 360). It is important to note that believing people are destined to be together does not imply that an individual cannot also believe that relationships can be developed and refined. Thus, a belief in destiny does not mean that an individual cannot also have growth beliefs (Knee, 1998). Rather, the two beliefs are independent constructs.

Previous research has shown that endorsement of a destiny belief results in individuals more often disengaging from the relationship if they experience negative events, whereas individuals who have a strong belief in growth are more likely to develop and employ maintenance strategies in an attempt to work through the negative events (Knee, 1998). Destiny believers put a lot of effort into analyzing the potential success and compatibility of the relationship whereas growth believers tend to spend more time developing strategies to continue the relationship (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003). Individuals who believe in growth are also more likely to have long term committed relationships (Knee, 1998). Destiny theorists are more likely to have long term relationships if they are initially satisfied with the partner, and they are more likely than nondestiny theorists to end the relationship sooner if they are not initially satisfied (Knee, 1998). Other studies have illustrated this difference as well; Franiuk, Pomerantz, and Cohen (2004) found that people who believed in a “soulmate” theory, which is very similar to the destiny theory, were more satisfied if they felt that a partner was ideal than individuals who believed in a “work-it-out” theory, which is similar to growth theory.

Further studies have illustrated that individuals who have a growth belief and who are oriented towards cultivating the relationship are more likely to realize the faults that a partner has and still be able to work on the relationship and be satisfied in it (Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor,

Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001). In fact “it is even possible that when oriented towards cultivation, one’s satisfaction depends on one’s ability to accept a partner warts and all, feeling that one understands, accepts, and cares for him or her in part because of such acknowledged limitations” (Knee et al., 2001, p. 813). These findings suggest that an individual’s theories of relationships influence what traits make them happy in relationships and what methods they use to initiate relationships. Other research has shown that implicit theories affect the perceptions of a partner and relationship quality (Ruvolo & Rotondo, 1998). Studies have also found that individuals with high growth beliefs are more likely to see conflict as an opportunity to improve the relationship and to learn more about their partner, whereas individuals with low growth beliefs feel less committed to their partners after disagreements (Knee, Patrick, Victor, & Neighbors, 2004). Knee and colleagues (2004) found that while high growth beliefs served as a buffer during conflict in relationships, destiny beliefs also served as a buffer in a different way. A person high in destiny can walk away from a conflict still committed to the relationship because if they feel that the relationship is meant to be then they view the disagreement as minute and insignificant in the grand scheme of things (Knee et al., 2004). These findings illustrate the fact that destiny and growth beliefs are not opposite or opposing beliefs, rather they are independent spectrums that can interact.

Studies have found that individuals with high growth beliefs are more likely to see conflict as an opportunity to improve the relationship and to learn more about their partner, while individuals with low growth beliefs feel less committed to their partners after disagreements (Knee et al., 2004). These findings indicate that individuals with high growth beliefs take disagreements as a chance to learn more about their partner and the relationship, thus they feel more committed to them after a disagreement (Knee et al., 2004). Knee and colleagues (2004)

also found that while high growth beliefs served as a buffer during conflict in relationships, destiny beliefs also served as a buffer in a different way. A person high in destiny can walk away from a conflict still committed to the relationship because if they feel that the relationship is meant to be than they view the disagreement as minute and insignificant in the grand scheme of things (Knee et al., 2004). These findings illustrate the fact that destiny and growth beliefs are not opposite or opposing beliefs, rather they are independent spectrums that can interact.

In relation to disagreements it was also found that people who have a soulmate theory are more likely to walk away and give in during an argument than people who hold a work-it-out theory (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002). This finding could be due to the fact that soulmate or destiny theorists feel that if the relationship is meant to be it will work itself out so they do not feel the need to put any effort into arguing. This speculation makes sense for the work-it-out or growth theorists, as they would be more likely to continue discussing the disagreement in order to learn more about the relationship and potentially grow from the argument.

It is important to note that neither theory is superior to the other. Both theories can be beneficial or maladaptive depending on the situation. A destiny belief can be harmful if it results in the termination of a potentially successful relationship, or it could be beneficial if the first impression a destiny theorists gets is a favorable one which results in the maintenance of a relationship that goes through hard times because the destiny theorist feel that they are meant to be (Knee, 1998). A growth theory may be detrimental if it causes an abusive relationship to continue because the growth theorist attempts to work on the relationship in spite of the abuse (Knee, 1998). In turn, a growth theory can be a positive thing when a growth theorist uses relationship problems to help the relationship grow (Knee, 1998).

Many of the aforementioned studies focused on implicit theories of relationships in committed relationships. To the author's knowledge no research has been conducted on the role these theories play in adults who are single, that is, not in a relationship. Thus, the current study aims to expand existing research on implicit theories of relationships by evaluating them in the context of both committed individuals and singles and examining the effect that these theories have on dating initiation strategies.

In addition to studying differences in relationship initiation, the current study aims to uncover why individuals initiate relationships. Perceived similarity will be measured using an adapted version of a scale that Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, and Moorman-Eavers (2006) used to assess perceived similarity in couples. This variable was added in order to examine whether destiny or growth beliefs predict the amount of similarity desired in potential romantic partners. I also chose to examine the relationship between reasons for dating and destiny and growth beliefs. Prior research conducted by Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) focused on approach and avoidance techniques in regards to achievement goals. The results of this study illustrated that individuals who used performance-avoidance strategies (striving to avoid failure) experienced decreased success on tasks in spite of working as hard as those using performance-approach strategies (striving to achieve success) (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). The researchers hypothesized that this result was due to a loss of intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). In subsequent studies the approach-avoidance framework was extended to the domain of implicit theories of ability (Cury, Elliot, Fonseca, & Moller, 2006). The results indicated that entity theorists were more likely to adopt performance-avoidance goals, which had a negative effect on math performance (Cury et al., 2006). Building on the results in the achievement field, I

extended this work to examine potential differences in goals for dating adopted by destiny and growth theorists.

Many of the aforementioned studies focus on implicit theories of relationships in relation to individuals who are currently involved in a romantic relationship. To the author's knowledge no research has been conducted on the role of these implicit theories in single adults. Thus, the current study aims to expand the current knowledge on implicit theories of relationships by evaluating them in the context of singles and examining the effect that these theories have on risk taking in the form of dating initiation. Following are the main aims of the study:

Aim 1: Examine the relation between implicit theories of relationships and dating risks. It is hypothesized that individuals with strong destiny theories, relative to those with weaker beliefs, will take more dating risks. I do not postulate any specific hypotheses for the relation between growth beliefs and dating initiation.

Aim 2: Examine the relation between implicit theories of relationships and similarity preference.

Aim 3: Examine the relation between implicit theories of relationships and reasons for dating. It is hypothesized that destiny and growth beliefs will predict different dating goals, with strong growth beliefs predicting more approach-oriented goals and strong destiny beliefs predicting more avoidant-oriented goals

Aim 4: Examine the relation between implicit theories of relationships and dating frequency.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 230$; 115 women) were recruited through the StudyResponse Project (Stanton & Weiss, 2002). The participants were of varying ages ($M = 41.48$ years, $SD = 12.62$, range = 64), and approximately four-fifths of the sample was Caucasian (85.2 % White, 2.2 % Black or African American; 3.6 % Hispanic, 4.0 % Asian; 0.4 % Native American; and 4.5 % Other).¹ Sixty-five of the participants reported that they were single and seventy-two reported that they had been divorced.

Procedure

The participants were recruited through the StudyResponse Project, which is an online social science research resource that recruits participants and distributes surveys online for a fee. Only individuals who were over 18 and United States residents were permitted to participate in the study. Researchers in many domains have begun to use this resource for recruitment purposes (e.g. McMillan, Hwang & Lee, 2003; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). StudyResponse notified potential participants of the study and provided them with the URL for the study. The “standard draw” procedure was used; individuals who participated were entered into a random drawing for an incentive (e.g. retail giftcard).

Participants gave their consent to participate online and were allowed to discontinue the survey at any time during the course of the experiment. The introduction to the study indicated that they would be questioned about their relationships and experiences with dating. They were notified that this research would help the researcher better understand dating strategies. At the close of the study, the participants were debriefed and were informed that the study was specifically examining how different beliefs about relationships influence dating initiation.

Measures

¹ Two ages were not possibly part of the population (Ages reported as 321 and 774) so mean substitution was utilized.

Demographic Information

Participants were asked to indicate their gender, race, age, and religiosity.

Implicit Theories of Relationships Scale

This scale was adapted from the 22-item measure developed by Knee and colleagues (2003). We reduced the scale to 12-items, with six items for destiny and six items for growth beliefs. Participants indicated their agreement with the 12-items on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For the six destiny items, higher numbers indicated higher destiny beliefs; for the six growth items higher numbers indicated higher growth beliefs. Internal reliability for destiny was 0.80, and internal reliability for growth was 0.75.

Dating Risk Scale

This 4-item scale was created in order to assess the risks that individuals take in relationship initiation. Items included the participants' likelihood of blind dating, Internet dating, asking someone out, and speed dating. Participants indicated their likelihood of participating in each form of dating using a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (not likely at all) to 7 (very likely). Higher scores indicated that the participant was very likely to engage in that form of dating behavior ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Dating Frequency

Participants were asked to indicate how many dates they had gone on in the last two months.

Perceived Similarity Scale

Similarity preferences were measured using an adapted version of a scale that Lutz-Zois and colleagues (2006) used to assess perceived similarity in couples. The 39-item scale was reduced to 12-items and the wording of the items was changed to relate to dating instead of

committed couples. The 12-items were evaluated on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (not at all similar) to 5 (very similar), higher scores indicated that the participant felt that the characteristic mentioned was an important one to have similarity with the person they choose to date ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Reasons for Dating

Participants' reasons for dating were assessed with a 4-item measure adapted from the approach-avoidance literature (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) to assess dating goals. Items included "One of the main reasons I seek or sought a romantic relationship was/is to avoid missing an opportunity to find a partner with whom I connect," "One of the main reasons I seek or sought a romantic relationship was/is to find true love," "One of the main reasons I seek or sought a romantic relationship was/is to develop a sense of safety and security," and "One of the main reasons I seek or sought a romantic relationship was/is to avoid being lonely". The 4-items were evaluated on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results

Before exploring my primary hypotheses, I first examined correlates of implicit theories of relationships. These analyses were run in order to determine if gender and age predicted the endorsement of destiny and growth theories. Gender had no effect on destiny beliefs, $t(217) = -0.14, p > 0.05$. However, gender did have a significant effect on growth beliefs, $t(218) = -2.03, p < 0.05$, with females endorsing higher growth beliefs than males. Age was not a significant predictor of destiny ($F(1, 220) = 0.56, p > 0.05; R^2 = 0.003$) or growth beliefs ($F(1, 220) = 0.37, p > 0.05; R^2 = 0.002$).

Hypothesis 1

To examine if destiny beliefs predict frequency and risk-taking in dating, I conducted a hierarchical regression with dating risk as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 226) = 0.85$, $p > 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.01$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(226) = 0.03$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.002$. Neither growth ($t(226) = -0.02$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = -0.002$) nor destiny ($t(226) = 1.54$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.14$) were significant predictors of overall dating risk. Because I was also interested in the specific types of dating that destiny and growth beliefs predicted I examined the two items on this scale that were more modern and innovative in nature; speed-dating and internet dating. I conducted a hierarchical regression with likelihood of internet dating as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 225) = 2.03$, $p > 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.03$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(225) = 0.98$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.12$. Growth was not a significant predictor of the likelihood of Internet dating, $t(225) = -0.80$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = -0.12$, however destiny beliefs were marginally significant predictors, $t(225) = 1.88$, $p = 0.06$; $\beta = 0.23$. As destiny beliefs increase so does the likelihood of internet dating (see Table 1). I conducted another hierarchical regression with likelihood of speed dating as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 225) = 0.88$, $p > 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.01$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(225) = 1.05$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.10$. Growth was not a significant predictor of the likelihood of speed dating, $t(225) = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.01$, nor were destiny beliefs, $t(225) = 0.94$, $p > 0.05$; $\beta = 0.09$.

Hypothesis 2

To examine if destiny and growth beliefs relate to similarity preference, I ran a hierarchical regression with similarity preference as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 223) = 10.84, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.13$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(223) = 0.89, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.03$. Growth was a significant predictor of the similarity preference, $t(223) = 3.68, p < 0.001; \beta = 0.14$; as growth beliefs increased so did similarity preference. Destiny was also a significant predictor of the similarity preference, $t(223) = 3.54, p < 0.001; \beta = 0.12$; as destiny beliefs increased so did similarity preference (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 3

To test if destiny and growth beliefs would be significant predictors of differing reasons for dating, I ran a hierarchical regression for each reason listed. The first hierarchical regression was conducted with the dating strategy of trying to avoid missing opportunities as the dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 218) = 3.91, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.05$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(218) = 1.59, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.17$. Growth was not a significant predictor of dating to avoid missing opportunities, $t(218) = 0.92, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.12$. However, destiny belief was a significant predictor of dating to avoid missing opportunities, $t(218) = 2.30, p < 0.05; \beta = 0.25$; as destiny beliefs increased so did dating to avoid missing opportunities. The second hierarchical regression was conducted with dating to find true love as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 218) = 4.47, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.06$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(218) = 0.69, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.07$. Growth was a significant predictor of dating to find true love, $t(218) = 2.27, p < 0.05; \beta = 0.27$; as

growth beliefs increased so did dating to find true love. Destiny beliefs were also significant predictors of dating to find true love, $t(218) = 2.26, p < 0.05; \beta = 0.23$; as destiny beliefs increased so did dating to find true love. The third hierarchical regression was conducted with dating to develop security as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 218) = 3.88, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.05$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was marginally significant, $t(218) = 1.86, p = 0.06; \beta = 0.19$. Growth was a significant predictor of dating to develop security, $t(218) = 2.11, p < 0.05; \beta = 0.26$; as growth beliefs increased so did dating to develop security. Destiny beliefs were not significant predictors of dating to develop security, $t(218) = 1.19, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.12$. As individuals' growth and destiny beliefs increase so does their tendency to date in order to develop security. As individuals' destiny beliefs decrease dating in order to develop security does not really change regardless of growth beliefs. As individuals' growth beliefs decrease and destiny beliefs increase, dating in order to develop security decreases (see Figure 1). The fourth hierarchical regression was conducted with dating to avoid loneliness as my dependent variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 217) = 3.12, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.04$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(217) = 0.65, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.07$. Growth was not a significant predictor of dating to avoid loneliness, $t(217) = 1.01, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.13$. Destiny beliefs were significant predictors of dating to avoid loneliness, $t(217) = 2.44, p < 0.05; \beta = 0.28$; as destiny beliefs increased so did dating to avoid loneliness (see Table 2).

Hypothesis 4

To examine if destiny beliefs would be significant predictors of dating frequency, I ran a hierarchical regression with the number of dates gone on in the past 2 months as my dependent

variable and both destiny, growth and their interaction term as my predictors. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 199) = 2.11, p > 0.05, R^2 = 0.03$. The destiny beliefs x growth beliefs interaction term was not significant, $t(199) = -1.10, p > 0.05; \beta = -0.25$. Growth was not a significant predictor of dating frequency, $t(199) = 0.68, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.18$. Destiny was a marginally significant predictor of dating frequency, $t(199) = -1.93, p = 0.06; \beta = -0.44$; as destiny beliefs increased the frequency of dates decreased (see Table 1).

Exploratory Mediation Analysis

I examined dating to avoid loneliness as a mediator in the destiny theory dating frequency relation. Consistent with results already reported above, destiny accounted for a significant proportion of variance in frequency of dates in the past 2 months; $t(201) = -2.16, p < 0.05; \beta = -0.15$, and dating to avoid loneliness; $t(219) = 2.82, p < 0.01; \beta = 0.19$. I completed steps three and four of the mediation in a single regression analysis that revealed the mediator (dating to avoid loneliness) accounted for unique variance in the number of dates gone on in the last 2 months above and beyond destiny beliefs, $t(193) = -2.75, p < .01; \beta = -0.20$. As dating to avoid loneliness increased, individuals reported going on fewer dates. When the variance accounted for by dating to avoid loneliness was partialled, the association between destiny beliefs and dating frequency became non-significant, $\beta = -0.13, ns$; Sobel $z = 1.96, p = .05$ (see Figure 2).

Discussion

In extending the research on implicit theories of relationships to the domain of dating and relationship initiation, I first examined if endorsement of growth or destiny beliefs predicted dating risks and strategies. Neither belief was a significant predictor of overall dating risks but, destiny belief was a significant predictor of internet dating. This may indicate that individuals who endorse destiny beliefs are more willing to utilize new forms of dating because they are

continuously searching for the one individual with whom they are compatible. Destiny endorsers may feel that using alternative methods to dating increases their likelihood of finding the right romantic partner.

After examining the relationship between implicit theories of relationships and dating risks, I examined the relationship between beliefs and similarity preferences. Both growth and destiny beliefs were significant predictors of similarity preferences. Individuals who strongly endorse a growth or destiny belief have a greater preference for similarity when choosing a potential romantic partner relative to those who less strongly endorse the beliefs. Further research should be done to determine whether similarity plays a role in destiny and growth theorists' initial satisfaction in new relationships. This might be relevant especially for destiny theorists because in Knee's (1998) initial study on implicit theories of relationships he found that initial satisfaction was strongly linked to relationship longevity for high destiny theorists. Individuals who endorsed a strong destiny belief terminated relationships sooner than low destiny theorists if they were not initially satisfied (Knee, 1998).

Following the analysis of similarity preference, I examined the relationship between implicit theories of relationships and dating goals. Endorsing a destiny belief predicted dating to avoid missing opportunities and to avoid loneliness. Endorsing a growth belief predicted seeking relationships in order to develop security. Both growth and destiny beliefs predicted seeking a relationship in order to find true love. Thus it seems that strong growth theorists are more likely to endorse approach goals and strong destiny theorists are somewhat more inclined to adopt avoidant-oriented goals. This parallels research in achievement domains demonstrating entity theorists are more oriented towards performance avoidant goals, whereas, incremental theorists tend to be more mastery approach oriented (Cury et al., 2006). Additionally, past work in an

achievement context, has demonstrated that avoidant goals can lead to poorer performance and less effort (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007). Similarly, dating goals that were avoidant in nature, (avoid loneliness) predicted less dating frequency. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Cury and colleagues (2006). They illustrated that individuals who endorse an entity view of intelligence were more likely to adopt performance-avoidance with these goals being associated with negative outcomes such as decreased performance (Cury et al., 2006). In the present study it seems that the performance-avoidance strategy that endorers of destiny theorists adopt is not affective in increasing the number of dates that an individual initiates.

The mediator of avoiding loneliness in the destiny belief/dating frequency relationship opens doors to new research in relation to the model of cultivation and evaluation orientations that Knee and colleagues (2003) proposed. This model suggests that individuals with higher growth and lower destiny beliefs are cultivation oriented. These individuals are driven by mastery and development relationship goals. However, individuals who hold higher destiny and lower growth beliefs are more evaluation oriented and focused on finding the ideal relationship and judging their partner's compatibility (Knee et al., 2003). It would be interesting to delve deeper into the reasons that individuals date to examine whether the model can be extended to individuals who are not in committed relationships. Nearly 30% of the sampled population in the present study reported being single, illustrating that pursuing the research on implicit theories of relationships in both the field of singles and the field of individuals in relationships are relevant and important endeavors. Extending the cultivation-orientation model to include the goals of individuals who are not in relationships may help to improve the generalizability of the model. It may also help to answer the question: Do the goals of high destiny and high growth theorists' change after entering a relationship? How static are implicit theories of relationships?

Although the present study advances and supports previous research there are still a few limitations worth noting. First it may be helpful to include more single individuals in the sample. The sample included both singles and individuals in relationships. Having a larger sample of single individuals may help to uncover differences in theories and how the theories affect goal orientations as individuals move from being single to entering a relationship. A longitudinal analysis of dating behavior and relationship satisfaction as well as longevity may be helpful in determining the different ways in which the theories affect decisions and goals throughout all phases of relationships. It may also be beneficial to include social desirability scales in future research, as reporting about one's dating patterns and behaviors can be driven by societal norms. It is possible that some individuals may have reported what they felt were the socially desirable responses to questions of dating frequency and reasons for dating. Providing a social desirability scale may help to rule out these possibilities.

Another limitation of the current study is that no causal conclusions can be drawn since there was no experimental manipulation of theories. Other studies have manipulated implicit beliefs of relationships in participants who were involved in romantic relationships (Franiuk et al., 2004), but no studies have extended this in order to manipulate the theories of individuals who are not in relationships. By manipulating individual's implicit theory of relationships, researchers could explore how these implicit theories affect risk taking in dating initiation as well as dating goals.

The present study examined self-reported dating behavior and did not examine actual dating behavior. Future research could also extend the present study to examine participants' behavior in dating situations (e.g. a speed or internet dating paradigm). Speed dating experiments have been conducted successfully in the past to examine gender differences in mate selection

(see Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, & Simonson, 2006 for a review). This type of experiment could be conducted to examine how implicit theories of relationships influence dating initiation and mate selection.

In conclusion, the present study adds to the implicit theories of relationship field by extending the research to include dating initiation and single individuals. I provided a glimpse into the mechanisms that may underlie dating strategies, reasons for dating, as well as the number of dates. This research points to a number of future research directions in an area that is extremely relevant to individuals' mental health and wellbeing (Hendrick, 2006), that is finding a relationship partner. The continuation of research in the field of implicit theories of relationships can have important implications for the development of relationships, which can help individuals to cultivate healthy relationships.

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Table 1
Ordinary Least Squares Regression Parameter Estimates for Destiny, Growth, and the interaction term on likelihood of internet dating, similarity preference, and dating frequency

<u>Predictor</u>	<u>Internet dating</u>		<u>Similarity Preference</u>		<u>Number of dates</u>	
	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate
Des	.23*	.12	.12**	.03	-.44*	.23
Grow	-.12	.15	.14**	.04	.18	.27
Des X Grow	.12	.12	.03	.03	-.25	.22
Variance Explained	1.1%		12.7%		3.1%	
	N = 228		N = 226		N = 199	

Note. Des = destiny, Grow = growth, Des X Grow = interaction term

* $p = 0.06$. ** $p < 0.001$

Table 2

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Parameter Estimates for Destiny, Growth, and the interaction term on reasons for dating

<u>Predictor</u>	<u>Avoid Missed Opportunities</u>		<u>True Love</u>		<u>Safety/Security</u>		<u>Avoid Loneliness</u>	
	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate
Des	.25**	.11	.16	.23**	.10	.15	.12	.10
Grow	.12	.13	.06	.27**	.12	.15	.26**	.12
DesXGrow	.17	.11	.11	.07	.10	.05	.19*	.10
							.08	.13
							.28**	.11
							.13	.13
							.07	.11
								.05
Variance Explained	5.1%		5.8%		5.1%		4.1%	

Note. Des = Destiny, Grow = growth, Des X Grow = interaction term

N = 217 * $p = 0.06$ ** $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. *Predicting dating for security from destiny and growth beliefs*

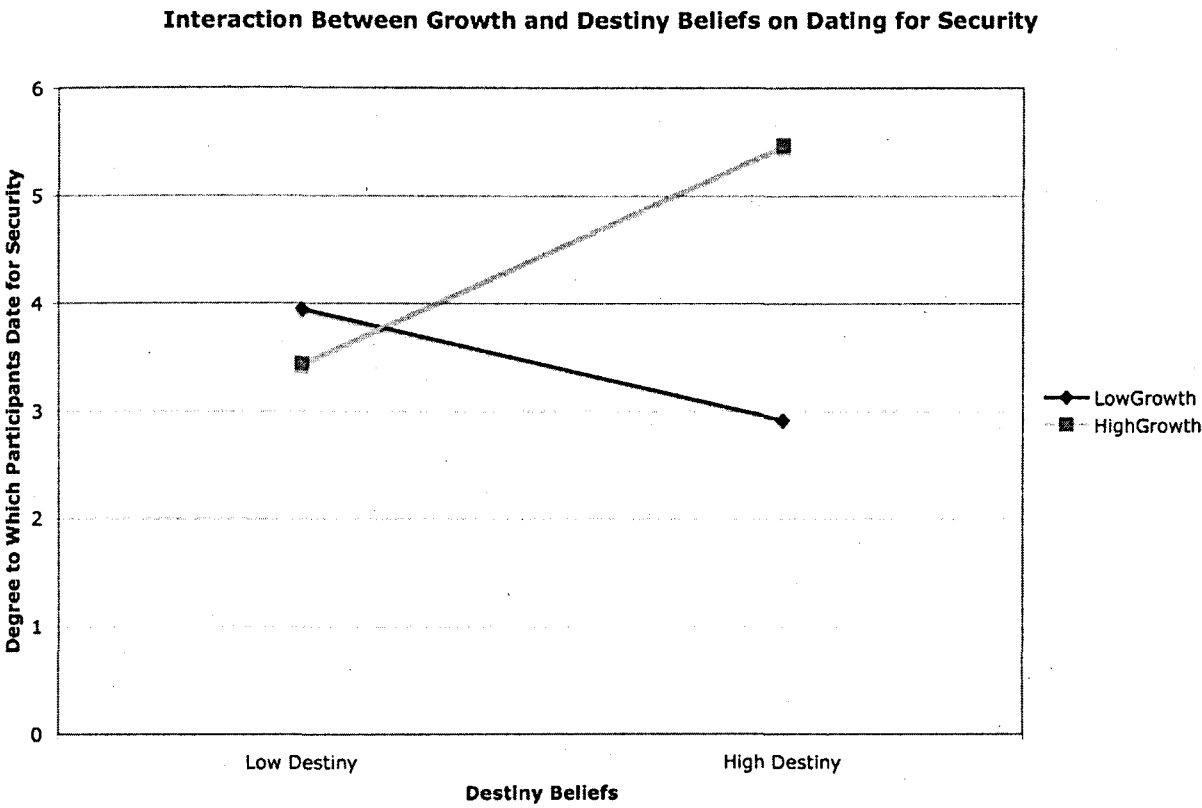
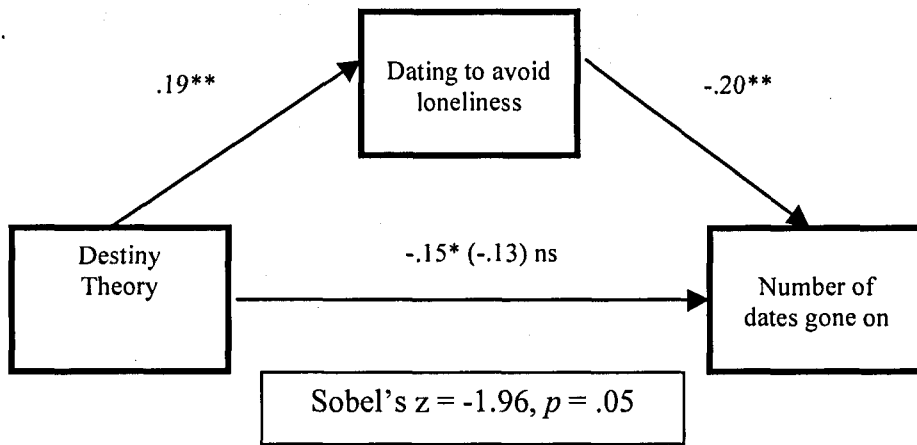


Figure 2: *Examining whether dating to avoid loneliness mediates the association of destiny beliefs and the number of dates gone on in the past 2 months.*



Note. The values in the figure represent standardized regression coefficients. The coefficient in parentheses represents the association of destiny with dates when the variance from reason for dating is partialled.