

# The Common Fate Mediation Model: Does Communication of Ideals Mediate the Relationship between Ideal Similarity and Relationship Satisfaction?

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**Abstract.** The aim of our study is to test whether the communication of ideals mediates the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction using the Common Fate Mediation Model (Lederhann & Macho, 2009). To assess mediation using Structural Equation Modeling, a general three-step procedure is suggested: (1) the selection of a good fitting model, (2) testing the direct effects and (3) testing the mediating effect by means of bootstrapping. One-hundred couples completed several scales assessing ideal similarity and communication based on the Ideal Partner and Relationship Scales (Fletcher et al., 1999) and relationship satisfaction using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). The results indicate (1) a good model fit, (2) both direct effects that constitute the indirect effect are significant, but the direct effect of similarity on satisfaction is not and (3) the bias-corrected (and the percentile) bootstrapped confidence limits revealed a significant indirect effect, providing evidence that the communication of ideals fully mediates the relationship between perceived ideal similarity and dyadic satisfaction.

**Key words:** Common Fate Mediation Model, Structural Equation Modeling, Communication of Ideals, Ideal Similarity, Relationship Satisfaction

## I. Introduction

Given the important role romantic relationships play in an individual's life, researchers have long been interested in what people want from their partners/relationships and what factors contribute to relationship satisfaction. Fletcher and Simpson (2000) propose that judgements and perceptions of relationships depend not only on the nature of the individual and interactions involved but also on "third parties" – mental images of the ideal partner/relationship. According to Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, and Giles (1999, p. 72), "partner and relationship ideals will include chronically accessible knowledge structures that are likely to predate – and be causally related to – judgements and decisions made in ongoing relationships". Drawing from both a social-cognitive and evolutionary perspective, Fletcher et al. (1999) examined lay relationship and partner ideals in romantic relationships from both a social-cognitive and an evolutionary perspective. In a series of 6 studies, they found that the ideal partner factors are warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness and status-resources,

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while relationship ideals are defined by two factors that parallel the first two partner ideals: *relationship intimacy-loyalty* and *relationship passion*.

The Ideals Standards Model (ISM – Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Simpson, Fletcher, & Campbell, 2001) proposes that partner and relationship ideals serve three functions: evaluation, explanation, and regulation. Specifically, the size of discrepancies between ideal standards and perceptions of the current partner or relationship should be used by individuals to (a) estimate and evaluate the quality of their partners and relationships, (b) explain or provide an understanding of relationship events as well as (c) regulate and make adjustments in their relationships.

Research testing the Ideals Standards Model have given support for some of its basic postulates. For example, studies have shown that partner and relationship are evaluated more positively when perception of the current partner/relationship more closely match the individual's ideal standards (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001, Fletcher et al., 1999) and break-up rates are lower when ideal standards are met (Fletcher et al., 2000). Also, investigating the flexibility of ideal standards, Campbell et al. (2001) showed that the higher individuals rated themselves on warmth/trustworthiness, vitality/attractiveness and status/resources, the higher and less flexible their ideals were; also, the more their partners matched their ideals, the higher they rated their relationship quality.

Investigating the consistency between partner perception and ideal standards and the partner regulation attempts, Overall et al. (2006) found that greater regulation attempts were associated with lower ideal-perception consistency and that stronger partner regulation was associated with more negative self-evaluations, more self-regulation by the targeted partner and lower relationship satisfaction. Further investigating regulation attempts, Overall, Fletcher, Simpson, and Sibley (2009) tested the success of different communication strategies when it came to producing desired change in partners. The results of their study showed that direct strategies (positive and negative) were perceived as unsuccessful but predicted increased change over the next 12 months while positive-indirect strategies did not predict change but were perceived as more successful.

Although individuals that feel less satisfied with their intimate relationships perceive their partners as not fulfilling their ideals (Fletcher et al., 1999) or as falling short of their partners' ideals (Campbell et al., 2001; Overall et al., 2006), the associated emotions with each type of discrepancy should differ (Campbell et al., 2001). Focusing on the outcomes of different perceived partner-ideal discrepancies, Lackenbauer and Campbell (2012) showed that perceiving one's partner to be the source of partner discrepancy was associated with emotions of dejection, while perceiving to be the source of partner discrepancy was associated with agitation emotions.

Although there are promising results regarding the Ideal Standards Model, there are several issues that need to be further addressed. One such issue concerns the similarity of ideal standards that people hold about partners/relationship. We do

not know whether possessing ideals that are similar to the ones held by the partner facilitates important relationship outcomes, such as satisfaction. Also, we do not know how ideals are communicated to the partner and if this communication influences relationship satisfaction. Finally, communication of ideals could influence relationship satisfaction, but it could play a mediating role in the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction. The aim of our study is to test the last hypothetical relationship between variables using a new and underutilized model for dyadic data analysis: the Common Fate Mediation Model (CFMeM).

*Ideal Similarity, Communication of Ideals, and Relationship Satisfaction*

Studies in the field of mate preferences have shown that people prefer partners similar to themselves in terms of personality, physical appearance, attitudes (Berscheid et al., 1971; Botwin et al., 1997; Humbad et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2004) and that this similarity is associated with attraction and relationship satisfaction (Burlinson & Denton, 1992; Byrne, 1971). Investigating three models of complementarity (Carson's model, Higgins's model, and the model of similarity), Markey and Markey (2007) found that only the similarity model accurately described the personalities participants tended to find romantically desirable. Acitelli et al. (2001), examining the importance of similarity of marital ideals to relationship satisfaction, found that similarity relates to the length of the relationship and satisfaction. However, these studies did not take into account the dimensions proposed by Fletcher et al. (1999), and the authors were not interested in the ratings of both partners. Therefore, we assessed similarity of the ideal dimensions as proposed by Fletcher et al. (1999) and took into account the ratings of both partners.

Research interested in predictors of relationship satisfaction found communication between partners to be a vital component (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Carrere & Gottman, 1999). Communication about various topics leads to positive relationship outcomes (Montesi et al., 2011, Gable et al., 2006, Lippert & Prager, 2001) and consensus between partners should play an important role. Although ideals play an important role in ongoing romantic relationships, researchers were not interested in the process of revealing one's ideals about partners/relationships and its contribution to relationship satisfaction. To address this issue, we asked both members of each couple to evaluate the degree to which they share with their partners' information about ideal standards they hold in order to evaluate if the communication about their ideals leads to relationship satisfaction.

Regarding the relationship between similarity of ideals and sharing them with the partner, research suggests that people are more likely to disclose information about themselves when they perceive similarity to the target of disclosure or having something in common (Derlega, Lovejoy, & Winstead, 1998; Derlega, Winstead, & Folk-Barron, 2000, Derlega, Winstead, Mathews, & Braitman, 2008). According

to the “similarity-attraction hypothesis”, individuals feel attracted to similar others perhaps because they provide consensual validation (e.g., Byrne, 1971) and this indirectly confirms that they are correct in their thinking (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Accordingly, we believe that greater perceived ideal similarity leads to higher levels of communication (about ideals). Finally, the aim of our study is to assess to what extent the communication of ideals mediates the relationship between perceived ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction using the common fate mediation model (CFMeM).

#### *Models for Dyadic Data Analysis*

In the past years, there has been an increasing interest in dyadic data analysis. To address such interest, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM, Kenny, 1996, Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) has been designed to estimate the impact of a person’s independent variable on his or her own dependent variable (actor effect) and on the dependent variable of the partner (partner effect). It implies that two dyad members influence each other in the form of partner effects, which create nonindependence between the members. The APIM has been used in numerous studies concerning close relationships (Theiss & Nagy, 2010; Ramirez, 2008; West, Popp, & Kenny, 2008; Erol & Orth, 2013; Furman & Simon, 2006) and, according to Ledermann and Kenny (2012), has almost become the default in research interested in dyads (parent-child, patients and caretakers, therapists and clients and so forth). Also, when interested in mediation at the level of the dyads, researchers have used APIMeM (Kenny, 1996, Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011), an extension of APIM, which estimates mediator effects within dyads in which the *a* variable of one person may influence his/her *b* variable (actor effect) or the *b* variable of his/her partner (partner effect). It is clear that the APIM and its extension have dominated the field of dyadic data analysis.

Although underutilized, there are alternatives to the APIM. One such alternative is the Common Fate Model (CFM); this can be used for variables that have an effect on both members. Although several authors have approached the methodological side of the model (Gonzalez & Griffin, 1997, 1999; Griffin & Gonzalez, 1995; Woody & Sadler, 2005), it hasn’t yet found wide application. The same goes for its use when interested in mediation at the level of the dyads. Although the APIM is a key tool for studying dyads, Ledermann and Kenny (2012) think it has been used in some cases in which the CFM would have been more theoretically appropriate.

The purpose of our study is to test whether the communication of ideals mediates the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction using the Common Fate Mediation Model (Ledermann & Macho, 2009).

*The Common Fate Mediation Model*

The classical Common Fate Model (CFM) was proposed by Kenny (Kenny, 1996; Kenny & La Voie, 1985) and Griffin and Gonzalez (1995; Gonzalez & Griffin, 2002) and is depicted in Figure 1. In the model, the ellipses represent the latent variables, each measured by two indicators (represented by rectangles), reflecting the scores of each dyad member (e.g., husband and wife) on the underlying latent construct. A direct effect ( $d$ ) connects the latent variables  $X$  and  $Y$  (the common-fate factors). Also, covariances between the error terms of the two persons are allowed. When using the CFM, all factor loadings should be fixed to one, yielding one degree of freedom (thus statistically identifying the model).

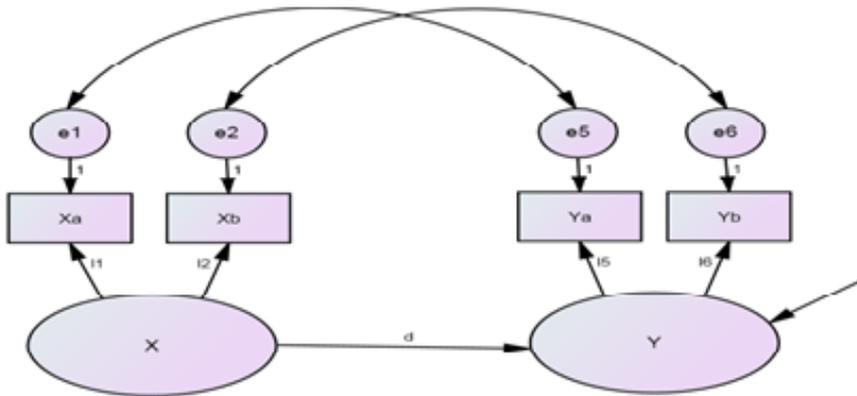


Figure 1: The standard common fate model.  $XA$  and  $XB$  indicate manifest variables measured in Person A and Person B;  $X$  and  $Y$  denote latent variables (Lederman & Kenny, 2012).

The common fate mediation model (Lederman & Macho, 2009) shown in Figure 2 is an extension of the classical CFM and is made up of one exogenous (independent) and two endogenous (dependent) measurement models and a structural model. A measurement model describes the relations between the observed and unobserved variables. In Figure 2, the three measurement models consist of three latent variables ( $X$ ,  $M$ , and  $Y$ ), three pairwise manifest variables ( $XA$ ,  $XB$ ,  $MA$ ,  $MB$ ,  $YA$ , and  $YB$ ), and six error terms ( $e1$  to  $e6$ ). The measurement model provides the link between scores on a measurement instrument and the underlying constructs they are designed to measure (Byrne, 2010). In each CF measurement model, the covariance (correlation) between two manifest indicators is assumed to be due to the influence of a common dyadic variable (fate).

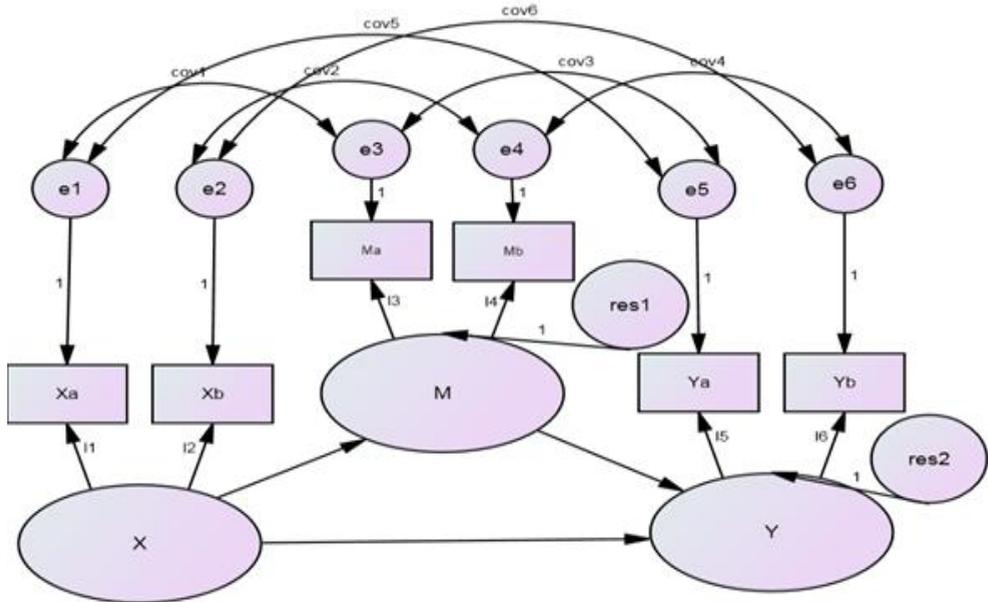


Figure 2. The unconstrained Common Fate Mediation Model. *XA*, *XB*, *MA*, *MB*, *YA*, and *YB* indicate manifest variables measured in Person A and Person B; *X*, *M*, and *Y* denote latent variables; *e1* to *e6* represent error terms; *resM* and *resY*, denote residuals; *cov1* to *cov6* indicate error covariances; *I1* to *I6* represent factor loadings; *a*, *b*, and *c* indicate structural coefficients (Lederman & Macho, 2009).

The CF mediation model is based on the three assumptions that (a) dyad members are affected by a common influence, (b) mediation takes place and should be modeled at the dyadic level, and (c) the variables measured in both dyad members are reliable indicators of the latent variables (Ledermann & Macho, 2009). As to the first assumption, Gonzales & Griffin (2012) believe research questions involving similarity of dyad members are naturally tested with the latent variable model (i.e., CFM) and we believe communication and relationship satisfaction to be dyadic constructs (in that it affects both partners underlies, and the focus is on the dyad rather than the individual). Also, as opposed to the APIMeM, the CFMeM has more statistical power to detect mediation because there is only one mediating effect in the CF mediation model with three latent common fate constructs, whereas there are eight such effects in the API mediation model with three mixed variable pairs (Ledermann & Macho, 2009).

In specifying the CFM, it is common to set the factor loadings of all indicators to 1 (Cook, 1998; Gonzalez & Griffin, 1999; Woody & Sadler, 2005). In addition, it is common to include covariances (*cov1* to *cov6* in Figure 2) between the measurement errors of each type of dyad member (Gonzalez & Griffin, 1999;

Woody & Sadler, 2005). A substantial error covariance indicates that two indicators measure something in common not represented by their respective latent constructs. This may be due to a common method variance (e.g., response biases or tendencies). Using SEM, the estimation of such error covariances, increases the complexity of a given model and can lead to a poor model fit if these covariances turn out to be small. Therefore, error covariances that are not substantial (not significant and standardized coefficients  $< .10$ ) may be removed.

Using SEM, Ledermann and Macho (2009) propose three steps to estimate and test mediation. The first step is the selection of a reasonable model that is consistent with the data. After setting up the model as described above (including within-person error covariances and all factor loadings fixed to 1), the authors suggest, in line with Baron and Kenny (1986; see also Kenny, 2008), to start with a model that implies partial mediation (i.e., the model with direct effect  $c$ ). Mediation models without a direct effect between the initial and the final outcome variable (suggesting complete mediation) are generally superior to models indicating partial mediation in terms of statistical power to detect a substantial mediation effect, as there is no direct effect between the independent and the final outcome variable in the complete mediation model. The second step consists of testing the structural coefficients  $a$  and  $b$  that constitute the mediating effect using the model selected (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986). For mediation to occur, both coefficients have to be significant because it makes little sense to speak of mediation if both  $a$  and  $b$  are not substantial (although the product  $ab$  may yield significant). If the model selected implies partial mediation, coefficient  $c$  is tested for significance too. If this direct effect is not substantial in size (either insignificant or  $< .10$ ), the hypothesis of partial mediation is rejected and the model indicating complete mediation may be estimated. In the final step, the mediating effect  $ab$  is tested for significance. Ledermann and Macho (2009) propose the bootstrap method to test the indirect effect  $ab$ . Bootstrapping is a resampling technique in order to estimate statistical parameters. Multiple subsamples of the same size as the original are drawn randomly, with replacement, and provide data for empirical investigation of the variability of parameter estimates and indices of fit (Byrne, 2010). In reporting the results, Ledermann and Macho (2009) use both the bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence limits and the percentile confidence intervals (a given effect is significant if the respective confidence interval does not contain zero). In order to obtain reliable estimates of the percentile and bias-corrected confidence limits, the authors propose to use 5000 bootstrap samples.

### ***The present study***

The aim of our study is to test whether the communication of ideals mediates the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction using the Common Fate Mediation Model (Ledermann & Macho, 2009). Accordingly, we set up the model as shown in Figure 3 with similarity of ideals as

an independent variable ( $X$ ), communication of ideals as a mediator ( $M$ ), and relationship quality as a final outcome variable ( $Y$ ).

## II. Method

### *Participants*

A total of 100 engaged and newlywed couples provided self-report information on ideal similarity, communication of ideals and relationship satisfaction. All participants were required to have been dating their partners for at least 3 months. The mean age of the sample was 24.73 ( $SD= 2.56$ ) for men and 24.62 ( $SD= 2.42$ ) for women. The average length of the relationship was 3.13 years.

### *Procedure*

The participants were informed that we were interested in ideal standards that people hold about their partners and relationships. All participants completed several scales (individually) and were advised to pay attention to the requirements of the questionnaires (as some items will be the same, unlike the requirements).

### *Instruments*

*Partner and relationship ideals.* The Partner and Relationship Ideal Scales (Fletcher et al., 1999) contain 69 items that form three partner ideal subscales (warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status-resources) and two relationship ideals' subscales (intimacy-loyalty and passion). Given the large number of items and the substantial variation in the items adopted within each subscale, the authors proposed a short version of the scales they are confident would perform adequately in future research. Considering the extended measures the participants would have to complete concerning ideal standards, we found it useful to use the short form of the scales (six items for each of the five subscales). Following on with the procedure used in previous studies (Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), we employed the Partner and Relationship Ideal Scales to assess ideal similarity and communication of ideals, asking the participants to rate each item in different terms.

*Ideal similarity.* The Partner and Relationship Ideal Similarity Scales contained the same items as the Partner and Relationship Ideal Scales (30 items), but the participants were asked to rate each item in terms of each item in terms of "how similar do you think you and your partners' ideals are", using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very similar*) to 5 (*very dissimilar*). Considering the results of the meta-analysis obtained by Montoya, Horton, and Kirchner (2008) where they state that perceived similarity, rather than actual similarity, is predictive of attraction in existing relationships, we were interested in perceived ideal similarity, rather than actual similarity.

*Communication of ideals.* The participants assessed the degree of communication concerning ideals' standards they hold about partners/relationship

using the Partner and Relationship Ideal Communication Scales (30 items). Their responses were rated on 5-point Likert-type scales (*1 = we don't discuss at all, 5 = we discuss very much*).

*Relationship satisfaction.* The satisfaction subscale of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) was used to measure spouses' satisfaction with their marriage (10 items). Sample items from this subscale include, "In general, how often do you think that things between you and your spouse are going well?" and "Do you ever regret that you married?" (reverse-scored); these responses were measured on a 6-point scale (*1 = all the time, 6 = never*).

### III. Results

#### *Descriptive results*

Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas for all scales are presented in Table 1. The internal consistencies of each scale were very good for both genders, ranging between .80 and .88. The independent samples *t* tests indicated no gender differences.

	Mean		t	Reliability	
	Women	Men		Women	Men
Similarity of ideals	119.10 (11.97)	120.43 (12.60)	-.11	.85	.83
Communication of ideals	117.08 (12.19)	117.48 (11.81)	-.09	.86	.80
Relationship satisfaction	40.01 (3.30)	39.45 (3.43)	-.28	.88	.81

*Table 1:* Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities of The Partner and Relationship Ideal Similarity Scales, The Partner and Relationship Ideal Communication Scales and Relationship Satisfaction

*Note:* Standard deviations appear in parentheses. Degrees of freedom for the independent samples *t* tests were 198.

The correlations between similarity of ideals, communication of ideals and relationship satisfaction are presented in table 2. Tests of independent samples indicated no significant gender differences. Therefore, the correlations below the diagonal are calculated across the entire sample, while the diagonal contains correlations between partners. Results indicate that people reporting higher ideal similarity also report more communication about those ideals and higher relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, people who disclose more information about their ideals report higher relationship satisfaction.

	1	2	3
1.Similarity of ideals	.89		
2.Communication of ideals	.68	.90	
3.Relationship satisfaction	.69	.72	.70

Table 2: Zero-Order Correlations Between the Partner and Relationship Ideal Similarity Scales, The Partner and Relationship Ideal Communication Scales and Relationship Satisfaction

Note: Correlations are calculated across the entire sample. Correlations between partner's ratings appear along the diagonal.

### Mediation analysis

Following the three steps proposed by Ledermann and Macho (2009), we tested whether the communication of ideals mediated the relationship between similarity of ideals and relationship satisfaction.

Estimator	Estimates	SE	95% CI	95% CI BC
$X \rightarrow M: = a$	.66	.07	.52, .81	.51, .81
$M \rightarrow Y: = b$	.14	.02	.08, .18	.09, .18
$X \rightarrow Y: = c$	.04	.02	-.01, .09	-.01, .08
$X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y: = ab$	.09	.01	.05, .13	.06, .13

Table 3: Testing the Direct Effects and Indirect Effect Within the Common Fate Mediation Model Using Bootstrapping (5000 samples)

Note: Estimates are unstandardized.  $X$  = Similarity of Ideals;  $M$  = Communication about Ideals;  $Y$  = Relationship Satisfaction;  $SE$  = standard error;  $CI$  = confidence interval;  $BC$  = bias-corrected.

Step 1: Selection of a good fitting CF mediation model. To evaluate the goodness of fit of the model, we used the Chi-square statistic and the RMSEA with  $RMSEA \leq .05$  indicating a close fit. Using the program Amos 20, the CFM indicating full mediation was consistent with the data:  $\chi^2=3.06$  ( $p=.38$ ),  $RMSEA=.01$  ( $p=.48$ ). Also,  $GFI=.99$ ,  $AGFI=.92$ , and  $CFI=1$ , suggesting a very good model fit. All the reliabilities (proportion of explained variances) of the single measures were 70% or higher indicating that most of the variance in the indicators is due to the latent dyadic variables (see Figure 3).

Step 2: Testing the direct effects. Both direct effects  $a$  and  $b$  that constitute the indirect effect were significant (see Figure 2 and Table 3). However, the direct effect  $c$  is not significant, suggesting full mediation between perceived ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction through communication of ideals.

Step 3: Testing the mediation effect. To test the indirect effect between marital problems and marital quality, bootstrap analyses were conducted to estimate the confidence limits of the direct effects and the indirect effect on the basis of 5000 bootstrap samples. The bias corrected (and the percentile) bootstrapped confidence limits revealed a significant indirect effect  $ab$  (Table 3).

The results show that, at the dyad level, perceived ideal similarity explains 47% of variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2=0,47$ ), while perceived ideal similarity and communication about ideals explain 59% of variance in relationship satisfaction ( $R^2=0,59$ ). The CFMeM (see Figure 3) also indicate that perceived ideal similarity has a positive direct effect on ideal communication and ideal communication has a positive direct effect on relationship satisfaction.

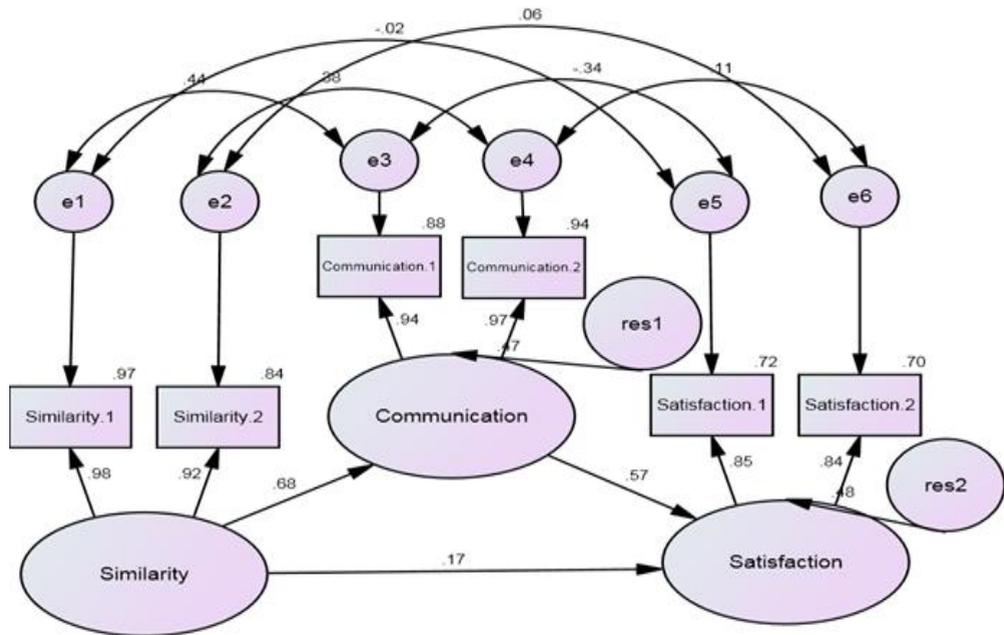


Figure 3. The Common Fate Mediation Model with standardized coefficients testing the association between ideal similarity, communication of ideals and relationship satisfaction.

#### IV. Discussion

The purpose of this article was to estimate and test mediation in dyadic data at the level of the dyads for distinguishable dyad members. The Common Fate Mediation Model (CFMeM) presented here to assess mediation can be used if the observed variables represent dyadic constructs that exert influence on both partners, if the causal associations between the constructs should be analyzed at a dyadic level, and if the observed variables are reliable indicators of the latent variables (explained variances of 50% or higher). All three assumptions were met. The CFMeM, compared to the APIMeM, has generally more statistical power to detect substantial mediating effects because there is only one mediating effect (there are three latent common fate constructs), whereas there are eight such effects in the APIMeM (there are three mixed variable pairs).

Following the three-step procedure proposed by Ledermann & Macho (2009), the results showed that the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction is fully mediated by the communication of ideals: (1) the model fits the data very well, (2) the direct effects *a* and *b* are significant, while the direct effect *c* is not, and (3) the bootstrapped confidence limits revealed a significant indirect effect *ab*.

Our results, in line with others (Fletcher et al., 1999, Campbell et al., 2001; Overall et al., 2006), emphasize the importance ideal standards play in romantic relationships. While other studies have focused on the consistency between ideals and perception of the current partner, our attention shifted towards the role ideal similarity and communication about ideals play in relationship satisfaction. This research revealed that similarity of ideals leads to communication about those ideals (significant direct *a*), communication about ideals leads to relationship satisfaction (significant direct *b*), and similarity of ideals leads to relationship satisfaction through communication about ideals (significant indirect effect *ab*). This shows that individual experiences in romantic settings influence judgements of relationship outcomes which, in turn, influence the reality experienced by each partner.

Relationship and partner ideals are central components of the social mind that people use to guide and regulate their interpersonal worlds (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000). Relationship standards are “characteristics that the individual believes a partner or relationship should have. Standards per se are not dysfunctional [but may] become problematic when they are extreme or rigid or when they detract from other aspects of an individual's life” (Baucom, Epstein, Sayers, & Sher, 1989, p. 32, apud Kohn & Sayers, 2005, p. 319). At the dyad level, people influence each other's view points which, in turn, influence the way each partner experience reality. Examining relationship and partner ideals may have practical implications for the study of marital functioning and distress, particularly for cognitive behavioral couples' therapy (CBCT). If an individual has unrealistic high standards, it could be difficult or impossible to live up to them and that this can lead to distress. Therapists conducting CBCT may help clients identify their extreme ideal standards and find an alternative or more balanced standards that would narrow the gap between their ideals and the reality of their relationship.

### *Conclusions*

One limitation of this current research is that the data are cross-sectional, and it is not possible to draw causal inferences. Experimental or longitudinal research is needed to pinpoint the role communication of ideals play in the relationship between ideal similarity and relationship satisfaction over time. Also, this study assessed ideals in a global manner, rather than taking into account the five ideal dimensions proposed by Fletcher et al. (1999).

Despite its limitations, this study provides important information relevant to the understanding of the complex nature of ideal standards and their role in relationship functioning, incorporating the role of similarity and communication of

ideals in relationship satisfaction. It also provides insights into a new method of testing mediation: the common fate mediation model (Ledermann & Macho, 2009).

There are several ways to improve and expand the use of the CFMeM: it can be applied to longitudinal data, additional pairs of dyadic variables may be incorporated to set up a model with multiple latent mediators, and it can be combined with the APIM consisting of both latent dyadic variables and variables that do not represent dyadic influences.

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