

Personality, Partner Similarity and Couple Satisfaction: Do Opposites Attract or Birds of a Feather Flock Together?

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Abstract

The goal of the study was to examine the relationship between personality and marital satisfaction and partner pairing. A national sample of 10,000 married couples took the PREPARE-ENRICH couple assessment and the results were examined to determine whether couples with similar personalities were more satisfied in their marriage than couples with dissimilar personalities and whether individuals were more likely to pair with someone with a similar personality or different personality. Couple types were divided into four categories: those both scoring high, both scoring low, both scoring moderate, and one scoring high-one scoring low on each of the five scales of personality. Results indicate that there is no relationship between personality similarities/differences and marital satisfaction, and that individuals are 66% more likely to pair with someone with a different personality than their own. However, personality similarities/differences do play a role in judgment of marital satisfaction, as those couples who both score high in each of the five dimensions of personality were significantly more satisfied in their relationship than those who both scored low.

Key words: Personality, marital satisfaction, Big Five, SCOPE, PREPARE-ENRICH, couple relationships

Introduction:

The United States boasts one of the highest divorce rates in the world, according to Popenoe & Whitehead (2010), who report that 40% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages result in divorce. Furthering the cause for concern is the research predicting that only 25% of couples will remain happily married after only ten years of marriage (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010). But what are the reasons for the prevalence of unhappiness in our relationships? Numerous studies have reported that similarities between partners in regards to intelligence, education, values, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and physical attractiveness predict greater rates of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Tan & Singh, 1995; Buss, 1985; Sprecher & Duck, 1994), but what about the very aspect of humanity which makes us who we are – our personalities? Recent development in the field of personality psychology has indicated that personality traits may be a powerful influence over our satisfaction within relationships and perhaps even predictive of whom we are attracted to as a couple.

SCOPE Personality Scales & the Five Factor Model

The "Big Five" is a term often used to reference the five major factors of personality which contemporary personality psychologists believe to be the most relevant, dominating traits. These five factors consist of: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Since the traits which compose the Big Five model are relatively broad, they are not nearly as predictive and accurate for explaining human behavior as some of the more abundant, specific traits. However, the five factor model serves as the most widely used and accepted criteria for explaining the foundation of personality.

The goal of this study is to examine the effects of partner personality on marital satisfaction. Using the SCOPE personality scales from the PREPARE-ENRICH assessment, personality traits can be examined in relation to individual and couple marital satisfaction. SCOPE is an acronym for the five factor model of personality, consisting of five scales: Social (extraversion), Change (openness), Organized (conscientiousness), Pleasing (agreeableness), and Emotional Stability (neuroticism). The SCOPE categories are designed to be positive and easy to understand.

Social (extraversion) includes characteristics such as excitability, assertiveness, sociability and emotional expressiveness. High social scorers seek out stimulation and the company of others, and are often energetic and talkative. They have a tendency to draw attention to themselves, and are enthusiastic about opportunities for excitement. On the other hand, those scoring low on the social scale lack the social exuberance characteristic of extraverts. Their quiet demeanor is not necessarily indicative of shyness, but rather signifies that they need less social stimulation and more time alone than extraverts.

Change (openness) refers to characteristics such as imagination, insight, curiosity, emotion, unusual ideas and variety of experience. It is a trait which distinguishes between imaginative/creative people and those who are more conventional and realistic. Those who score high in change tend to be more creative and aware of their feelings, as well as more likely to be intellectually curious and appreciative of art and beauty. On the contrary, those who score low in change are more likely to hold traditional beliefs and prefer the plain and obvious over the complex and ambiguous.

Organized (conscientiousness) is commonly associated with self-control, goal oriented behavior and thoughtfulness. The trait influences how we control and implement our impulses. Those who score high in organization typically prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior, whereas those who score low in organization generally are described as thrill-seekers and impulsive. They are often disorganized and pay less attention to detail compared to those who are considered very conscientious.

Pleasing (agreeableness) is characterized by compassion, trust, kindness, altruism, affection, and other prosocial behaviors. Pleasing individuals tend to be cooperative and considerate of others. They generally have an optimistic view of human nature and believe people to be basically good. Displeasing people are often suspicious and antagonistic and place self-interest above compromise with others. Sometimes their skepticism causes them to be unfriendly and unhelpful.

Emotional Stability (neuroticism) refers to an individual's emotions and mentality. Emotionally stable individuals do not often experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, moodiness, irritability, or depression. Those who score low in emotional stability are particularly vulnerable to stress and are quick to react emotionally. They tend to have a generally negative perception of situations and are often in bad moods. Individuals who score high in emotional stability are often more easy-going and emotionally stable. They are not typically upset easily and are less emotionally reactive than those scoring low in emotional stability.

Personality and Relationship Satisfaction

Though the five factor model of personality isn't intended to measure relationship dysfunction or satisfaction, research has begun examining relations between personality traits and marital distress. Using the five-factor model of personality, several studies have found links between personality and relationship satisfaction. Of these five, neuroticism seems to be the most consistent predictor of marital satisfaction. Kelly and Conley's (1987) report of a 40-year longitudinal study of married couples found that neuroticism was the strongest predictor of marital dissatisfaction, as well as likelihood of divorce. In a 2004 study done by Gattis, Berns, Simpson, and Christensen, distressed couples who sought counseling reported significantly higher levels of neuroticism than nondistressed couples. It is noteworthy that much of the evidence regarding neuroticism's negative correlation to marital satisfaction comes from longitudinal studies, indicating that neurotic attitudes early in a relationship may potentially predict its future course.

Beyond neuroticism, few other traits report consistent evidence predicting marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction. One study found that high extraversion in one spouse is associated with lower marital satisfaction reported by the other (Lester, Haig, & Monello, 1989), whereas Gattis et al. (2004) found no effect of extraversion on marital satisfaction. Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, and Richard (2010) furthered the research of personality and relationship satisfaction by examining three different types of personality effects: actor effects, partner effects, and similarity effects. In doing so, Dyrenforth et al. found that a person's own personality was related to their relationship satisfaction, as well as their partner's personality.

Though agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness have been under-researched, studies have generally found them to be beneficial and positively correlated with marital satisfaction (Botwin, Buss, & Shakelford, 1997; Gattis et al, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). As explained by Shiota & Levenson (2007), these results are unsurprising given that they are typically considered to be desirable qualities. It is possible that individuals exhibiting these socially desirable traits would pair together, resulting in a more satisfying relationship. However, Watson, Hubbard, & Weise (2000) reported inconsistencies regarding gender differences and couple types (dating vs. married). Perhaps each of the five personality traits has are related to relationship satisfaction, but the variation and inconsistencies found concerning significance may be due to differences in methods and small sample sizes.

Personality Similarity and Relationship Satisfaction

The literature previously reviewed indicates that personality traits have effects both on individual's satisfaction and their partner's. It is therefore necessary to explore the role that similarities and differences in their personalities play on a couple's satisfaction as a whole. It is assumed that personality traits are enduring qualities which shape our everyday behavior and interactions. Thus, Gonzaga, Campos, and Bradbury (2007) argued that couples with similar personalities tend to share similar emotional experiences, resulting in a positive association between personality similarity and relationship satisfaction. Several studies, including those by Luo and Klohnen (2005), and Luo, Chen, Yue, Zhang, Zhaoyang, and Xu (2008) found significant associations between similarity and relationship satisfaction. However, Dryenforth et al. (2010) found that there was little to no evidence supporting this theory.

As indicated by Dryenforth et al. (2010), a limitation to studies comparing similarity and relationship satisfaction is the methods involved. Since the majority of studies have focused on overall discrepancy scores (a sum of the differences between each partner's personality traits or a sum of the differences in overall relationship satisfaction), there is concern that discrepancy within the couples' satisfaction is unaccounted for. In addition, sources of variance that are unrelated to similarity or overall satisfaction may affect correlations between the two. In other words, we can't control for underlying problems or discrepancies outside the realm of what is directly measured.

In order to examine whether like-attracts-like or the reverse, "opposites attract," this study will further the work done by Watson et al. (2000). In their research, Watson et al. (2000) compared personality self-ratings and partner-ratings of 74 couples and compared the two for parallels/similarities in order to determine if certain personality types consistently "paired-up." The findings were insignificant. The results of the aforementioned study may be related to the relatively small sample size. Thus, in the current study we will examine 10,000 couples of five different couple typologies and compare the frequency of their personality similarities and

differences in order to identify whether “opposites attract” or “birds of a feather flock together.”

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that individuals will tend to pair with others who have personalities similar to their own (i.e. There will be a greater frequency of couples with similar personalities than those with dissimilar personalities).

It is hypothesized that couples with similar personalities will be more satisfied in their relationship than couples with different personalities.

Couples who both have low scores within the SCOPE personality scales are hypothesized to have lower satisfaction in their relationship than those couples who both have high scores.

The Emotionally Stable, Pleasing, and Change scales are hypothesized to have the greatest relationship to marital satisfaction.

Vitalized couples (high satisfaction) will most often have both partners scoring average-to-high in all five SCOPE scales, whereas Devitalized couples (low satisfaction) will most often have both partners scoring low in all five SCOPE scales.

Measures

Personality. Participants’ personality was measured using SCOPE personality scales, which is a component of the PREPARE-ENRICH (Olson & Larson, 2008) couple assessment. PREPARE-ENRICH uses a personality assessment called, SCOPE (an acronym for the five personality factors; Social (extraversion), Creative (openness), Organized (conscientiousness), Pleasing (agreeableness), and Emotionality (neuroticism)). The SCOPE personality scales consist of 7 different questions pertaining to each of the five scales, for a total of 35 items, and are scored on a basis of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (undecided), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The scores are then summed for each personality trait, and each partner’s personality scores are plotted on a graph, indicating whether they have a high score (28 and above), average score (15 – 27), or low score (14 and below) for each area.

Relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Couple Satisfaction Scale within PREPARE-ENRICH (Olson & Larson, 2008). The Couple Satisfaction Scale is a short, 10-question scale which looks at each of the ten core areas of married couples. Based on each individual’s response, a score of 10-50 is recorded, and converted to a percentile, indicating high satisfaction (85 – 100) through low satisfaction (0-15). The responses of couples are also compared to create a couple satisfaction score based on their positive couple agreement (PCA - items which both couples answer in similar fashion). The computer

report includes a couple typology of the couples. Couple typologies described by PREPARE-ENRICH consist of: Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, and Devitalized. Each typology is often associated with, but not necessarily indicative of relationship satisfaction, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

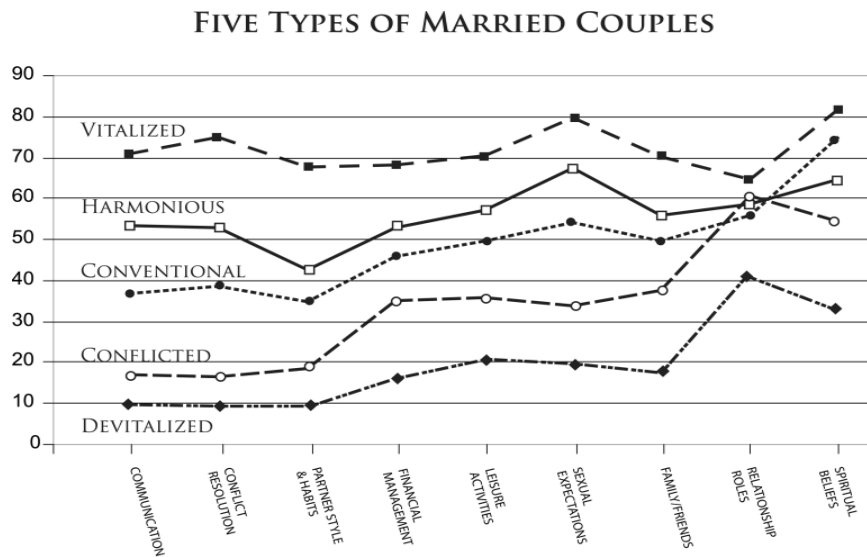


Figure 1: PREPARE/ENRICH Five Types of Married Couples

COUPLE TYPES & MARITAL SATISFACTION MEAN AND RANGE FOR PCA SCORES

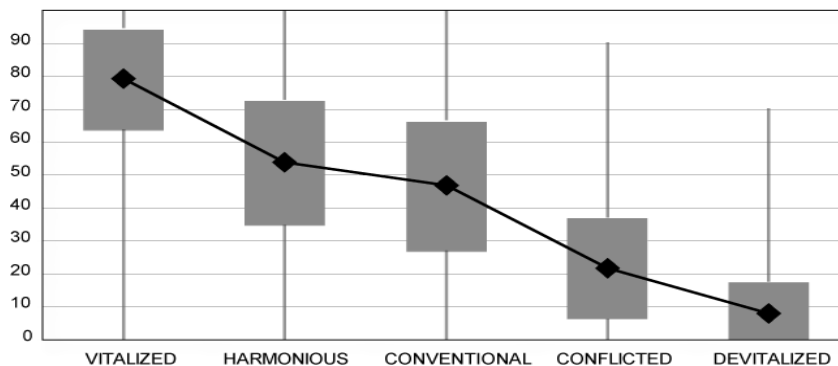


Figure 2: PREPARE-ENRICH Couple Types & Marital Satisfaction

Vitalized couples are considered the happiest couple type because they have the highest positive couple agreement (PCA) scores on the PE inventories. Harmonious couples have many strengths, but not as many as the Vitalized couples. They have high PCA scores in many areas, but often have low scores in the Children & Parenting area. Conventional couples are called traditional because they have more strengths in traditional family areas including Children & Parenting, Family & Friends, Traditional Roles, and Spiritual Beliefs. However, they often have lower scores on more internal dynamics such as personality issues, communication, and conflict

resolution. Conflicted couples have numerous growth areas and few strengths. They seem to disagree about many areas and have low scores on communication, conflict resolution, and others. Devitalized couples are often the least happy couple type because they have growth areas in almost all aspects of their relationship.

PREPARE-ENRICH is a widely used tool for measuring relationship strengths and growth areas, as well as marital satisfaction. Fowers and Olson (1989) completed a validation study of the Marital Satisfaction Scale and found that ENRICH had the ability to discriminate between stressed and non-stressed couples with 85% accuracy. In addition, PREPARE-ENRICH has high reliability based on the same study by Fowers and Olson (1989).

Method

As noted by Cooper and Sheldon (2002), the majority of studies done on personality and relationships consist of small sample sizes, with the average being 165 couples. The limitations of small sampling sizes lead to inconsistencies in the findings, discrepancies in demographics of participants and small samples coming from convenience rather than random sampling. In this study, a random sample of 10,000 married couples (2,000 couples from each of the five couple typologies) was obtained from those who took PREPARE-ENRICH. The Customized Version of PREPARE-ENRICH is the fifth version of the assessment, and is tailor made for each couple. It is a self-report instrument in which the first partner completes background information on the couple and the program selects scales that best suit the couple. Data was obtained from 10,000 random couples and their SCOPE personality scales, along with couple typology and marital satisfaction scores were analyzed for this research study.

Couples were grouped into four possible categories: both high, both low, both moderate, and one high-one low, based on their scores within each of the five personality scales. A frequency analysis was then performed to determine how many couples fell into each category. A Pearson chi-squared test determined whether the distribution was significantly different than what could be expected by chance.

The second analysis compared couples personality similarity/dissimilarity to their individual and couple satisfaction scores. A two-tailed t-test was run to verify statistical significance.

The third analysis grouped couples into their various couple typologies (2,000 couples per type) and compared their typology to the frequency and percentage of couples within each personality similarity/dissimilarity group. Significance was determined using a two-tailed t-test.

Participants

A national sample of 10,000 married couples completed the PREPARE-ENRICH assessment. A total of 9,875 individuals reported being of the male gender, and 9,885 reported being female, with 240 individuals choosing not to provide their gender. The sample consisted ages from 18 to over 70 years old, with the majority (18%) of the population falling into the category of 26-30 years old. The median length of marriage was 1-5 years (27%), with a range of less than one year to over 40 years of marriage. The majority (44%) of participants reported living in a suburban area, while 25% lived in a small town, 19% lived in a large city, and 12% lived in a rural area. Over half of the participants reported having a higher education, with 31% having some college/technical school, 31% finishing a four-year college, and 26% having a graduate/professional degree. The vast majority (78%) of the sample identified themselves as Caucasian, while smaller percentages of individuals reported various additional ethnicities. Seventy-seven percent reported their current marriage as their first marriage.

Results

Who Pairs with Whom

Hypothesis 1 predicted that people would tend to pair with others who share similar personalities. To test this hypothesis, a crosstabulation was used comparing each of the five personality scales to the percent of couples within each different pairing (both high, both low, both moderate, and one high-one low). The results were very clear and consistent across all five scales. As Table 1 shows, about two thirds of the couples reported having one individual high and one individual low on each of the five personality dimensions. A Pearson chi-square test demonstrates that there is significant differences between the frequency of couples who paired-up than would be expected by chance ($X^2 = 627.7$, $p < .000$). Therefore, it is concluded that people most often tend to choose partners who have different personalities than themselves.

SCOPE Status	SCOPE Scale									
	Social		Change		Organized		Pleasing		Emotional Stability	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Both Low	923	9.2%	928	9.3%	623	6.2%	839	8.4%	862	8.6%
Both High	397	4.0%	672	6.7%	1033	10.3%	936	9.4%	596	6.0%
Both Moderate	2555	25.6%	1912	19.1%	1957	19.6%	1834	18.3%	2285	22.9%

One-High, One-Low	6125	61.3%	6488	64.9%	6387	63.9%	6391	63.9%	6257	62.6%
Total	10000	100%	10000	100%	10000	100%	10000	100%	10000	100%

Table 1: Frequency of Similar/Dissimilar Couples on SCOPE

Personality Similarity & Marital Satisfaction

Two sets of analyses were applied to assess Hypothesis 2, which predicted that similarities in personality types would correspond to higher reports of relationship satisfaction than for those in relationships with dissimilarities in personalities. In order to test this hypothesis, the analysis focused on one of the five personality dimensions at a time. A mean value for individual satisfaction was obtained from the ratings of each of the 20,000 participants, and was analyzed according to their couple reports of similarities or dissimilarities within each of the five personality factors.

There were mixed findings. In general, there is no relationship between personality similarity and marital satisfaction. The mean satisfaction for those with one partner scoring high and one partner scoring low tends to remain average, but is not consistently higher or lower than the average scores for all three groups of similar personalities (both low, both high, and both moderate). However, individuals in relationships with both partners scoring high on any of the five dimensions of personality tend to be happier than those with both partners scoring low. Table 2 summarizes the results of comparing couples scores within the SCOPE scales to the average individual satisfaction value.

SCOPE Status	SCOPE Scale				
	Social	Change	Organized	Pleasing	Emotional Stability
	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction
Both Low	16.4	34.9	39.7	41.7	36.1
Both High	81.8	57.1	48.9	51.4	55.3
Both Moderate	47.7	45.6	44.4	43.1	44.7
One-High, One-Low	45.9	45.1	45.2	45.1	45.5
Total	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1

Table 2: Similarities/Dissimilarities of Couples on Personality Scales & Individual Satisfaction.

A second set of analyses for Hypothesis 2 focused on each of the five personality dimensions separately, but was evaluated using positive couple agreement (PCA) to measure couple satisfaction. As with individual satisfaction, the data did not support the hypothesis that couples with similar personalities would report higher satisfaction than those with dissimilar personalities. However, couples and individuals with differing personalities reported higher average satisfaction scores than those couples who both scored low in the five personality dimensions. Results are summarized in Table 3.

SCOPE Status	SCOPE Scale				
	Social	Change	Organized	Pleasing	Emotional Stability
	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction	Mean Satisfaction
Both Low	10.8	28.0	31.4	33.0	26.0
Both High	85.1	51.7	45.3	46.2	53.0
Both Moderate	49.9	41.5	39.0	38.4	40.3
One-High, One-Low	35.9	38.7	38.9	39.1	39.1
Total	39.1	39.1	39.1	39.1	39.1

Table 3: Similarities/Dissimilarities of Couples on Personality Scales & Couple Satisfaction (PCA).

Personality Traits & Marital Satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 was rejected, but the data revealed interesting differences between couples either both scoring high or both scoring low on the five factors of personality. Hypothesis 3 predicted that couples whom both report low scores in personality traits would have lower satisfaction in their relationship than those who both report high scores. As Tables 2 and 3 show, the findings support this hypothesis across all five personality scales, in both individual and couple satisfaction ratings. T-tests indicate that each reached significance with individual satisfaction ratings for both low and both high of: social ($t = 213.5, p < .000$, two-tailed), change ($t = 26.5, p < .000$, two-tailed), organization ($t = 10.5, p < .000$, two-tailed), pleasing ($t = 11.3, p < .000$, two-tailed) and emotionally steady ($t = 21, p < .000$, two-tailed). T-tests of couple satisfaction ratings for both low and both high were also statistically significant,

consisting of: social ($t = 74.3, p < .000$, two-tailed), change ($t = 24, p < .000$, two-tailed), organization ($t = 14, p < .000$, two-tailed), pleasing ($t = 13.2, p < .000$, two-tailed) and emotionally steady ($t = 27, p < .000$, two-tailed).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that emotional stability, pleasing, and organization would have the greatest relationship to marital satisfaction. The data supports the hypothesis; however, it was found that couples with both partners scoring high reported significantly higher levels of couple satisfaction, compared to those with both partners scoring low across all five dimensions of personality. The social, change, and emotional stability scales had the greatest relationship to satisfaction, indicated by the greater difference in reported marital satisfaction between couples scoring both low and those scoring both high within these dimensions. Results are statistically significant, as noted above.

Couple Type	SCOPE Scale									
	Social		Change		Organized		Pleasing		Emotional Stability	
	Both High	Both Low	Both High	Both Low	Both High	Both Low	Both High	Both Low	Both High	Both Low
VITALIZED										
Count	109	140	240	161	442	49	378	77	361	22
% within scale	27.5%	15.2%	35.7%	17.3%	42.8%	7.9%	40.4%	9.2%	60.6%	2.6%
HARMONIOUS										
Count	97	174	100	164	135	83	131	165	86	83
% within scale	24.4%	18.9%	14.9%	17.7%	13.1%	13.3%	14.0%	19.7%	14.4%	9.6%
CONVENTIONAL										
Count	66	186	101	201	160	129	161	174	66	139
% within scale	16.6%	20.2%	15.0%	21.7%	15.5%	20.7%	17.2%	20.7%	11.1%	16.1%
CONFLICTED										
Count	70	228	101	190	175	145	132	197	47	219
% within scale	17.6%	24.7%	15.0%	20.5%	16.9%	23.3%	14.1%	23.5%	7.9%	25.4%
DEVITALIZED										
Count	55	195	130	212	121	217	134	226	36	399
% within scale	13.9%	21.1%	19.3%	22.8%	11.7%	34.8%	14.3%	26.9%	6.0%	46.3%
Total										
Count	397	923	672	928	1033	623	936	839	596	862
% within scale	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: Five Couple Types & SCOPE

In order to further investigate the results, the couples were divided into each of the 5 couple types identified using PREPARE-ENRICH, with 2,000 couples per type. A cross-tabulation was used for each of the five personality scales and compared the percent of couples within each of the couple types to their personality similarities/dissimilarities. According to PREPARE-ENRICH, Vitalized couples tend to be the happiest, followed by Harmonious couples, Conventional couples, Conflicted couples, and the least happy being Devitalized couples. As shown in Table 4, the results support the previous data which indicated that couples who both score high in the five personality scales tend to be more satisfied in their relationships than those who both score low, when associating the five couple typologies with marital satisfaction levels.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that couples with a typology of Vitalized (high satisfaction) will most often have both partners scoring high in all five SCOPE scales, whereas Devitalized (low satisfaction) couples will most often have both partners scoring low in all five SCOPE scales. Table 4 indicates that hypothesis 5 is generally supported in terms of Vitalized couples, as Vitalized couples consisted of the highest percentage of couples scoring both high across all five personality scales. However, contrary to the previous findings of this study, Devitalized couples did not consistently have the highest percentage of couples scoring low across all five personality scales.

Further, the data indicates that those couples who both scored high on the emotional stability, pleasing and organized scales had the greatest likelihood of being Vitalized, which is associated with the highest satisfaction. These results differ slightly from the data obtained to test hypothesis 4, when the individuals' and couple's reported satisfaction was compared to the couples' personalities.

Discussion

The current study examined a random sample of 10,000 married couples to test how variations in the SCOPE personality scales (based on the "Big Five") effect attractions between individuals and their relationship satisfaction. The hypotheses were tested regarding whether personality similarity relates to marital satisfaction, to what extent certain personality factors effect marital satisfaction, and if there is evidence regarding whether or not opposites attract.

First, the debate regarding who is attracted to whom was examined. The hypothesis was the individuals would be more attracted to those who share similar personalities with themselves, or in other words, "like attracts like." The results indicated a rejection of this hypothesis, as approximately two-thirds of the couples surveyed found that one partner scored high and one partner scored low across all five personality scales. This is consistent with previous researching stating that spouses are not likely to have more similarities than expected

by chance (Gattis et al., 2004). The most interesting aspect of this finding is that although people are generally attracted to individuals with different personalities, the frequency of couple typologies were equal, implying that there is no significant correlation between personality similarities/dissimilarities and relationship satisfaction.

Two primary marital satisfaction scores were used, individual satisfaction and couple satisfaction (PCA). These scores were compared to couple personality types and later to the couples' typologies within PREPARE-ENRICH. The primary finding was that, across all five dimensions, couples both scoring high on each of the five scales were more satisfied than couples both scoring low in the five personality scales. This is noteworthy because although it is generally accepted that a variety of personality combinations may result in successful relationships, it appears that the "best" combination for a happy couple is for both couples to score high on the five factors.

Overall similarities in personality were not related to marital satisfaction, which is consistent with recent research (Dyrenforth et al., 2010; Shiota & Levenson, 2007). In these studies, couples were more satisfied in relationships where at least one person reported average-to-high scores within the five dimensions of personality. This may suggest that in terms of relationship satisfaction, it is more important to have complimentary personalities than to have similar personalities. As proposed by Shiota and Levenson (2007), similarities may be more important in early relationships than in later years when conflicts tend to arise. For example, it may eventually become problematic for both partners to be extremely open to change and new ideas because conflict is likely to arise when neither partner is able to be decisive. In contrast, if one person is willing to go with the flow and allow their partner to take charge, task completion may be less stressful.

The idea of complimentary personalities over similar personalities is also evident in the current data. Couples with personality traits of one high and one low report a consistent, average level of satisfaction, compared with to the variability of satisfaction levels for those three groups of similar personalities (both high, both low, and both moderate). An explanation for the inconsistency of marital satisfaction within the similar personality couples may be due to age differences. Shiota and Levenson (2007) compared personality with marital satisfaction over a 12-year longitudinal study consisting of various age groups. Their data indicated changes in satisfaction at different time periods, corresponding to personality similarities/differences. Depending on life events, it is implied that no particular pairing of personalities will result in high scores of life-long satisfaction, because unlike our personalities, our lives are constantly changing.

Though there is no definite trait that can predict relationship satisfaction, the current study found that all five personality scales relate to marital satisfaction. Additionally, the social,

change, and emotionally steady scales having the greatest relationship to individual and couple satisfaction. This is evident by the significant differences in average satisfaction reported by couples with both high or both low scores in social, change and emotional stability.

However, when personalities were compared to the couple typologies across all five personality dimensions, the organized, pleasing, and emotionally stable scales were the most important predictors of a vitalized typology. The vitalized couple is often considered the most satisfied and is based on various dimensions within the relationship rather than self-reported satisfaction. It is possible, therefore, that the satisfaction ratings correlated to couple typology is more reliable than self-reported satisfaction. The present research finds that the organized, pleasing, and emotional stability dimensions are the most important predictors of overall relationship satisfaction. This finding is consistent with other research regarding the importance of neuroticism (emotional stability) (Gattis et al. (2004); Karney & Bradbury (1995); Kelly & Conley, 1987), but also adds to the work of Watson, Hubbard, and Weise (2000) who found extraversion (social), conscientiousness (organization), and agreeableness (pleasing) to be replicable and rather strong predictors of marital satisfaction.

Finally, when the study compared PREPARE-ENRICH couple typologies to the frequency of SCOPE status groups (both low, both high, both moderate, and one high-one low), it was found that the Vitalized couples were most likely to have both partners scoring high across all five SCOPE scales. This is supported by the data indicating that couples scoring both high in the personality dimensions have higher marital satisfaction. However, contrary to previous findings, the Devitalized couples were not always most likely to have both partners scoring low across all five SCOPE scales. The data suggests that although the personalities of partners seem to matter for judgments of satisfaction, it is not the key to overall marital happiness.

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths of this study include its large, randomly selected sample and the measures of its constructs. The sample of 10,000 couples was obtained anonymously and was gathered from pre-existing data within the PREPARE-ENRICH database from couples who chose to take the PREPARE-ENRICH couple assessment. To ensure diversity and variability within the relationships, two thousand couples from each of the five identified marital types were selected for comparison. PREPARE-ENRICH boasts a high degree of reliability and validity and is a common measure of relationship satisfaction. The SCOPE personality scale is a measure of the Big Five personality traits and is a part of the PREPARE-ENRICH assessment. PREPARE-ENRICH is a convenient way to obtain both personality and relationship satisfaction scores from a non-bias sample. Personality data was compared to individual and couple satisfaction, as well as the overall couple typologies.

The cross-sectional nature of the data serves as a limitation because a direct influence between personality and satisfaction cannot be determined by correlational data. Though it was impossible to account for outstanding variables within the relationship which may affect each spouse's satisfaction, the use of couple typologies compared to personality types may aid in this limitation. Because the typologies are based on a variety of dimensions within the relationship and correspond to a certain level of satisfaction, the comparison of typology to personality similarities may account for discrepancies within the relationship which are not a direct result of personality traits.

Since the study measured the mean scores of individual satisfaction, it is limited by the inability to distinguish between what Dyrenforth et al. (2010) called partner effects and actor effects. Partner effects estimate the relationship between a person's personality and his or her spouse's satisfaction and actor effects estimate the relationship between a person's personality and that person's satisfaction. Since the data does not display individual satisfaction in relation to both partners' separate personality scores, it cannot be determined whether personality differences/similarities effect the individual satisfaction of either spouse.

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