PERSONALITY INFLUENCES ON MARITAL SATISFACTION:

AN EXAMINATION OF ACTOR, PARTNER,

AND INTERACTION EFFECTS

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

August 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the support, encouragement, and guidance of numerous individuals over the course of this project. In particular, I'd like to say to my advisor, Dr. William Ickes: I have been privileged to grow and learn under your mentorship. You are an extremely dedicated and concerned mentor who has always gone the extra mile to ensure that your graduate students receive superior training and skills for whichever field they may choose to enter. This dissertation would not be what it is today without your leadership, guidance, and continuous feedback.

To my family, which has now grown significantly over the last year: Thank you for your support and understanding on those many occasions when I was unable to attend family events and during those times when I just couldn't be there. Mom and dad, this degree is a result of your unwavering persistence and commitment to my education. My achievements are a direct product of your dedication and hard work over the past 27 years.

Last, but not least, to the one man who supports me unconditionally: my husband, Rahim. Thank you for your support and encouragement. There is no one else I would rather embark on life's journey with.

June 15, 2006

ABSTRACT

PERSONALITY INFLUENCES ON MARITAL SATISFACTION:

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Publication No. _____

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The University of Texas at Arlington, 2006

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The current research was designed to examine the associations between married partners' personalities and their marital satisfaction. The major goal of this research was to examine the unique predictive validity of 13 personality traits in an omnibus model in which the effects of all 13 traits were tested simultaneously. The data were analyzed using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), which enabled me to examine the effect of each personality variable (1) as a function of each participant's own trait score (an actor effect), (2) as a function of each participant's *partner's* trait score (a partner effect), and (3) as a function of the interaction between the actor and partner's

trait scores for each of the 13 traits assessed. The results revealed significant actor effects for openness to experience (-), conscientiousness (+), agreeableness (+), anxious attachment (-), social absorption (+), and sociosexuality (-), and significant partner effects for extraversion (-), psychological femininity (+), anxious attachment (-), social absorption (+), and sociosexuality (-). I also observed actor and partner effects for sensation seeking, both of which were qualified by the actor and partner's genders, respectively. I further observed significant effects of partner similarity for avoidant attachment and social individuation and significant partner interactions for anxious attachment and social absorption. The results from the current study confirm the importance of examining actor, partner, and interaction effects of personality on marital satisfaction, as well as the importance of examining relationship-specific variables because of the greater specificity (compared to the Big Five) that they offer in understanding individual cognitions and behaviors within the context of a marriage relationship.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the pioneering work by Terman, Butterweiser, Ferguson, Johnson, and Wilson (1938) on what makes happy couples different from unhappy ones, the study of marital processes and outcomes has expanded considerably across fields such as communication, psychology, and marital and family therapy. Many methodological and statistical advances have also been made, enabling contemporary researchers to determine more precisely how husbands' and wives' personalities influence both self-reported and partner-reported marital satisfaction (for a review, see Gottman & Notarius, 2002).

Unfortunately, most of the available literature still takes the form of simple correlational analyses that fail to take advantage of the more sophisticated statistical tools now available for multilevel data analysis (Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Gonzalez & Griffin, 2000; Reis, Capobianco & Tsai, 2002). In contrast, the present study examines how the personality traits of both the self (i.e., the actor), the marriage partner (i.e., the partner) and the similarity/dissimilarity between the actor's and partner's personality (i.e., the interaction term) influence the actor's self-reported marital satisfaction.

1.1 Background for the Present Study

Many researchers have used empirical precedents to guide their selection of the trait and temperament measures that they apply to the prediction of marital outcomes. Although this strategy makes sense in pragmatic terms, it has resulted in a psychological literature that continues to lack a common theoretical framework in which the associations between personality and marital satisfaction can be examined and conceptually integrated. As Karney and Bradbury (1995) have noted, the past 50 years have witnessed marital research becoming broader, but not deeper, because there have been relatively few attempts to integrate the findings of previous research. This lack of integration will also be addressed in the present study, in which I sought to integrate the available empirical research on personality and marital satisfaction into a more cohesive theoretical framework.

To make the following review of the relevant literature as manageable and informative as possible, I selectively review a subset of studies that have evaluated the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction. These studies report both the additive effects of partners' personalities on marital satisfaction as well as the interaction effects that reflect the similarity/dissimilarity between the partners' personalities. The subset of personality traits that I selected to review and examine in the current study were those which have repeatedly been associated with satisfaction in intimate relationships and/or have been strongly implicated to be important to the study of marital satisfaction. They include the Big Five traits, attachment anxiety, attachment

avoidance, psychological masculinity, psychological femininity, sociosexuality, sensation seeking, social absorption, and social individuation.

1.2 Personality and Marital Satisfaction: Actor and Partner Effects

Five Factor Model

Common to most personality psychologists is the view that individuals possess underlying structures (or traits) that result in a tendency to respond to the environment in predictable ways (Sullivan, 1997). As a result, many trait theorists, including Allport and Allport (1921), Cattell (1943), Fiske (1949), Tupes and Christal (1961), Goldberg (1976), Wiggins (1979), and McCrae and Costa (1985), have attempted to systematically organize the thousands of "trait" words available in the English dictionary into a parsimonious and reliable taxonomy. The general aim of the researchers at the time of the development of the Big Five was to effectively characterize how people's behavior can be described in everyday language, with a primary focus on the more genetically based temperamental foundations of personality traits (Noftle & Shaver, 2006).

The Big Five personality factors, *openness to experience*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, and *neuroticism*, are presumably the most fundamental yet conceptually distinct personality dimensions that can be used to describe the human personality. They are widely believed to occupy the highest and most abstract level in the hierarchy of personality descriptors. The Big Five traits have consistently been linked to marital satisfaction and are possibly the most frequently studied personality dimensions of recent decades (Goldberg, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 1985).

In studies intended to predict an individual's own marital satisfaction, researchers have reported positive relationships between satisfaction and the Big Five factors of extraversion (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000), agreeableness (Donnellan, Conger, & Bryant, 2004; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Watson et al, 2000), and conscientiousness (Gattis et al, 2004). On the other hand, researchers have consistently reported negative relationships between satisfaction and neuroticism (Donnellan et al, 2004; Gattis et al, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Watson et al, 2000) and between satisfaction and openness to experience (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

Researchers have also examined the relationship between an individual's satisfaction and his or her partner's personality. For both men and women, having a partner who is high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, but low on neuroticism predicted high satisfaction for both sexes (Botwin, Buss, & Schackelford, 1997; Donnellan et al, 2004; Kosek, 1996; Lester, Haig, & Monello, 1989). Interestingly, although Lester and his colleagues (1989) found that high extraversion in either partner was associated with a more dissatisfied spouse, Kosek (1996) later found that both the men and women's satisfaction was positively related to their spouses' score on extraversion. It is possible that one's partner's extraversion only becomes problematic at very high levels, i.e., when it leads the partner to spend too much time with other people.

Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance

The adult attachment perspective offers another set of personality dimensions that are relevant to satisfaction in close relationships (Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, &

Cowan, 2002). Adult attachment theory emerged from the psychoanalytic tradition and is primarily concerned with one's sense that a relationship partner will or will not be responsive to one's needs in times of stress (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2005). This theory directly stems from Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attempt to describe and explain (1) how infants become emotionally attached to their caregivers and (2) the consequences of the caregiver's differential responses to the infant's needs.

The dimensions of avoidant and anxious attachment have been related to romantic relationship outcomes in many different studies (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kobak & Hazan 1991). Individuals who score low on both of these dimensions exhibit the secure style of relating (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). In adult romantic relationships, secure individuals enjoy feeling close to their partner and feel confident that their partner will be reliable and responsive to their needs. In contrast, avoidant individuals lack confidence in their partner, whereas anxious/ambivalent individuals have a strong desire for closeness with their partner but lack confidence in their partner's responsiveness (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In a study by Simpson (1990), avoidant attachment was found to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction for both men and women, and anxious attachment was also negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, but only for women. Similarly, Collins and Read (1990) found that both partners were less satisfied with the relationship when the man was avoidant and the woman had an anxious attachment style. Finally, speaking to the issue of "partner effects," Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994) found that men who were in a romantic relationship with an anxious

woman reported less satisfaction than men who were in a relationship with a secure woman.

These findings indicate that individuals' marital satisfaction is predicted by both their own attachment style and their partners' attachment style. In general, it appears that high scores on the anxious and avoidant attachment dimension are associated with low levels of relationship satisfaction, both as "actor effects" (one's own attachment score predicting one's own satisfaction) and as "partner effects" (one's partner's attachment score predicting one's own satisfaction).

Gender Roles

In 1974, Sandra Bem developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). It treated masculinity and femininity not as bipolar opposites, but rather as two independent dimensions. In this two-dimensional model, individuals could be characterized as being masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. Individuals who scored high only on the masculine dimension were characterized as having an instrumental or "agentic" (more ambitious and assertive) orientation, whereas individuals who scored high only on the feminine dimension were characterized as having an expressive or "communal" (more sensitive, caring, and emotional) orientation. On the other hand, individuals who scored high on both the instrumental and expressive orientations were categorized as androgynous, whereas individuals who scored low on both the instrumental and expressive orientations were categorized as undifferentiated.

In efforts to predict an individual's own satisfaction, researchers have found that masculinity and femininity are both associated with relationship satisfaction, although

femininity is consistently found to exert greater influence (see Langis, Sabourin, Lussier, and Mathieu, 1994 for a review). When evaluating the effects of one's partner's personality on one's own level of marital satisfaction, researchers have found that, for both men and women, the more they perceived their partner as feminine, the more marital satisfaction they reported (Antill, 1983; Hafner & Minge, 1989; Ickes, 1985; Kalin & Lloyd, 1985). Thus, men who behave in relatively masculine ways can have satisfied partners, but only to the extent that they also score high on the femininity trait. The empirical literature has consistently shown that the partners of such men, who are categorized as the androgynous type, report high levels of satisfaction in their marriage (Antill, 1983; Baucom & Aiken, 1984).

These findings indicate that individuals' marital satisfaction is predicted by both their own gender role orientation and their partners' gender role orientation. In general, it appears that high scores on psychological femininity are associated with high levels of relationship satisfaction, both as "actor effects" (one's own attachment score predicting one's own satisfaction) and as "partner effects" (one's partner's attachment score predicting one's own satisfaction). The reason appears to be that the "feminine" qualities of empathy, caring, warmth, and nurturance are the ones that are most likely to contribute to a strong relationship bond that persists even in the face of outside problems and pressures on the relationship.

Sociosexuality

In 1991, Simpson and Gangestad developed a measure to assess individual differences in "willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual relations." This measure,

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termed the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI; 1991) identifies individuals as having either a *restricted* or *unrestricted* sociosexual orientation. Those with an *unrestricted* sociosexual orientation typically report having had multiple sexual partners within a given time period and are relatively comfortable engaging in sexual relationships in the absence of commitment or closeness. In contrast, those with a *restricted* sociosexual orientation typically report having had fewer sexual partners within the same time period and need to feel closeness towards and commitment from their partner before they are comfortable engaging in sexual relations.

Simpson and Gangestad (1992) suggested that individual differences in sociosexuality would serve as a "good candidate" variable in predicting romantic partner preference. For example, they reported that unrestricted individuals seek out romantic partners who are more physically and sexually attractive compared to those sought out by more restricted individuals. This finding may be particularly applicable to unrestricted men. Buss (1989) found that men generally place greater value on physical attractiveness compared to women, who are more likely to place a higher value on personal characteristics such as how considerate and kind their partner is.

Given the consistent finding that men tend to have a more *unrestricted* orientation (Buss & Barnes, 1986) and prefer mates who are physically attractive (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992), it is possible that men and women would not only have different preferences in the type of individual they choose to marry, but that women, who place a higher value on personal characteristics, might also benefit more from compatibility matching that is based on individual differences. This latter assumption,

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that women might benefit more from compatibility matching based on individual differences, has been promoted by several evolutionary theorists. In particular, women are expected to be more discriminating than men with regard to the personality characteristics they seek in their spouse as a result of their greater investment in bearing and raising a child (Botwin et al, 1997; Trivers, 1972).

Sensation Seeking

The impact of the sensation seeking trait is unequivocal in marital research: partners who are similar in their "need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences" (p.10, Zuckerman, 1979) are significantly more satisfied in their marriage compared to couples for whom there is a substantial discrepancy on this trait (Farley & Mueller, 1978; Ficher, Zuckerman, & Neeb, 1981; Lesnik-Oberstein & Cohen, 1984; Schroth, 1991).

The Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) consists of four sub-factors: thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility (Zuckerman, 1979). Many studies have revealed that, within the general population, and within the control groups in comparison studies, husbands generally score higher than their wives on sensation seeking (Ficher et al, 1981; Glicksohn & Golan, 2001). In cases where this balance is reversed such that the woman is higher in sensation seeking, one or both partners report relatively greater dissatisfaction with their marriage (Ficher et al, 1981; Apt & Hurlbert, 1992). The general consensus among these researchers is

that partner similarity for sensation seeking has important implications for both mate pairing and marital satisfaction.

These findings suggest that gender differences may be important to understanding the effects of sensation seeking on marital satisfaction. In general, it appears that for women, high scores on sensation seeking are associated with low levels of relationship satisfaction, both as "actor effects" (one's own sensation seeking score predicting one's own satisfaction) and as "partner effects" (one's partner's sensation seeking score predicting one's own satisfaction). For men, however, it appears that high scores on sensation seeking are associated with low levels of relationship satisfaction, but only as a "partner effect" (one's partner's sensation seeking score predicting one's own satisfaction). Apparently, high sensation seeking puts a strain on marriages, perhaps because of its link to the need for sexual variety or to high-risk activities more generally. However, many low sensation seeking women can still be satisfied if married to a high sensation seeking man, although the reverse does not appear to be true.

Relatedness and Autonomy

To study issues related to marital interdependence versus autonomy, Ickes, Hutchison, and Mashek (2004) developed the Social Orientation Scale which measures an individual's predisposition to become behaviorally and cognitively interdependent with others. This scale consists of two subscales that measure orthogonal dimensions of social relating. The first dimension, termed social absorption (SA), reflects the degree to which respondents tend to *behaviorally* "merge" with others and become part of an intersubjective system. The second dimension, termed social individuation (SI), reflects

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the degree to which respondents tend to *cognitively* distinguish themselves from others and maintain a psychological separation from them.

Previous research has shown that individuals who score high on social absorption tend to be supportive and understanding in their relationships, and are generally open to the experience of being positively responsive to and attached to their partner. These behavioral characteristics are consistent with their desire for and comfort with being a part of an interdependent relationship. On the other hand, individuals who score high on social individuation tend to be relatively detached from their partner, and generally feel uncomfortable with intimacy in relationships. These characteristics are consistent with their desire to maintain independence and emotional distance from their partner.

In an earlier study that made use of the present data set, Charania and Ickes (2006) found that *both* social absorption and social individuation were important predictors of relationship satisfaction. In general, high scores on social absorption were associated with high levels of relationship satisfaction, whereas high scores on social individuation were associated with low levels of relationship satisfaction.

With regard to the actor and partner effects for social absorption and social individuation, Charania and Ickes (2006) found that the interactions between the partners' scores on SA and between the partners' scores on SI significantly predicted marital satisfaction. In the case of social absorption, they found that individuals were increasingly satisfied with their relationship to the extent that one or both of the partners exhibited a preference for high levels of behavioral interdependence within the

relationship. In marriages in which the two partners were mismatched on SA, Charania and Ickes (2006) found that satisfaction was significantly lower for the partner who scored low on social absorption, that is, for the partner who was more resistant to the level of behavioral interdependence that the marriage relationship typically requires.

With respect to social individuation, Charania and Ickes (2006) found that greater similarity with regard to partner's desire for emotional distance and cognitive independence within the relationship was associated with greater satisfaction. In contrast, satisfaction suffered to the extent that one's partner's need to maintain a strong cognitive distinction between self and other (high SI) was not shared by the other partner (low SI). In such cases, satisfaction was found to be lower for the partner who was high on social individuation, that is, for the partner who exhibited a need to maintain a strong cognitive distinction between self and other.

These preliminary findings using the current data set further revealed that individuals who were high on both social absorption and social individuation (HH type) reported high levels of satisfaction in their marriage. This relatively high level of satisfaction was intensified when the HH type chose to marry someone who was also high on both social absorption and social individuation (Rehmatullah & Ickes, 2004). A finding of this type has been corroborated by several other researchers who have examined the role of *differentiation* in couples' relationships. Differentiation refers to an individual's ability to experience both intimacy with and autonomy from their significant other (see Rankin-Esquer, Burnett, & Baucom, 1997; Skowron, 2002). The available evidence suggests that individuals who are able to maintain a balance in their

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display of behavioral interdependence with their need for cognitive separation from their partner are relatively more satisfied in their marriage than individuals who do not maintain such a balance.

1.3 Personality and Marital Satisfaction: Interaction Effects

From a social psychological perspective, individuals rarely live in isolation; rather, their behaviors, cognitions, and even personalities will be affected by the situation (including the relationship) in which they exist. This perspective is informed by Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which views social interaction as the "raw material" of which close relationships are made. In its most basic form, Interdependence Theory specifies that the outcomes that result from interactions can be described in terms of their perceived advantages or disadvantages for self and partner (i.e., in terms of the relative rewards and costs to self and partner that result from different patterns of interaction behavior) (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997). Relationship researchers are increasingly using Interdependence Theory to help specify the ways in which social situations that emerge in dyadic relationships shape both intrapersonal and interpersonal processes (see Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

This interest in how partners' actions influence both their individual and joint outcomes has a parallel in the study of the influence of partners' personality traits on their marital satisfaction. Personality researchers have frequently tested for interactions between the respective personalities of dyadic partners when investigating the effects of interpersonal processes on individual outcomes. For example, it is possible that a

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person's outcome (i.e., marital satisfaction) is uniquely predicted by the combination of his or her standing on a given predictor (i.e., actor score on attachment anxiety) and his or her partner's standing on that variable (i.e., partner score on attachment anxiety).

It is also possible that a person's outcome is uniquely predicted by the interaction of the two partners' scores on a given predictor. One way to test this "interaction effect" is to multiply the actors' score by the partner's score to compute a product-based interaction term (e.g., the actor X partner interaction term). Another way to test this "interaction effect" is to compute the absolute difference between the two partners' scores on a given predictor and to use this measure of personality similarity/dissimilarity as the interaction term. Both methods provide equally valid tests of the "interaction effect," but they are based on different implicit models of what specific form the interaction effect should take. The absolute difference measure of the actor/partner interaction effect enables the researcher to tests for effects of personality similarity/dissimilarity on the dependent variable of interest (i.e., self-reported marital satisfaction) in cases where similarity/dissimilarity effects are presumed to be relevant (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006).

Because these two forms of interactions are highly correlated, researchers should choose the appropriate form based on theoretical considerations (see Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). In the present case, a review of the literature reveals a long history of interest in the influence of partner similarity/dissimilarity as the predominant form of partner interaction in studies of marital outcomes.

Much of this literature is based on tests of the *similarity hypothesis*, which argues that spousal similarity is related to marital satisfaction. Studies in this tradition often use the degree of (positive) correlation between husbands' and wives' scores on the same personality measure as an index of personality similarity, and then test to see of this index accounts for unique variance in the partners' marital satisfaction scores. Substantial evidence for the importance of personality similarity has been found in previous research for traits such as extraversion and openness to experience (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Watson et al, 2000), agreeableness and conscientiousness (Botwin et al, 1997; Kosek, 1996; Nemechek & Olson, 1999; Watson et al, 2000), neuroticism (Eysenck & Wakefield, 1981), secure attachment (Maclean, 2002), gender roles (Antill, 1983), social absorption, and social individuation (Charania & Ickes, 2006).

In contrast, there has been less overall support for the *complementarity hypothesis*, which proposes that spousal *dis*similarity is related to marital satisfaction. Spousal dissimilarity is typically indexed by the degree of negative correlation between husbands' and wives' scores on the same personality measure (i.e., it is the same metric of similarity/dissimilarity described above but now negative, rather than positive, correlations with the outcome measure are predicted). Although such "complementary effects" are less commonly found than "similarity effects," the complementarity hypothesis has received consistent support for a few traits such as dominance/ submissiveness (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997), and self consciousness and impulsivity (Nemechek & Olson, 1999). It has also received at least mixed support for traits such

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as extraversion/introversion and neuroticism/emotional stability (Eysenck, 1981; Lester et al, 1989).

1.4 Hypotheses Tested in the Present Study

The current study was designed to integrate the empirical literature on the associations between personality and marital satisfaction by placing these associations within a common theoretical framework for understanding dyadic outcomes in general. Specifically, I examined the unique predictive power of the trait scores of both the actor and his/her partner (i.e., the a*ctor effect* and the *partner effect*), as well as of the similarity or difference between the partners' personalities (the *actor/partner interaction effect*) in predicting marital satisfaction.

Although many traits have been linked to marital satisfaction in previous research, these traits have typically been evaluated in separate studies, independently of one another. It is therefore possible that the strength of the relationships between different personality traits and marital satisfaction that have been reported in previous research may not accurately reflect the unique impact that each of these traits exert when they are examined in combination. In 1997, Botwin and his colleagues noted this limitation by commenting that the literature lacked studies in which an array of personality factors were used to predict marital satisfaction, and that research based on the five-factor model might be one step towards obtaining a broader view of the relationship between personality and marital satisfaction.

Although a number of researchers have responded to this challenge (Donnellan et al., 2004; Gattis et al., 2004; Nemechek & Olson, 1999; Rogers, 1999; Watson et al.,

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2000), there continues to exist a need for researchers to examine the relationship between personality and marital satisfaction beyond the five-factor model. In fact, given the strong and often unique predictive power of neuroticism in comparison to the other Big Five factors, Karney and Bradbury (1995) have asserted that, "…whether other personality traits account for significant variance in marital outcome after controlling for neuroticism remains to be examined." The present research provides such a test, by simultaneously examining the unique predictive power of 13 "good candidate" personality dimensions that have previously been linked marital satisfaction.

As I have noted, however, a thorough examination of the role of personality on marital satisfaction requires the use of a statistical model in which actor effects, partner effects, and interaction effects can also be tested simultaneously. To meet this further condition (one that has also rarely been met in previous research), I analyzed the data obtained in the present study using the Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Campbell & Kashy, 2002). In the present application, APIM enabled me separate the unique effects of the actor's personality, the partner's personality, and the similarity/dissimilarity of the actor's and partner's personality for all of the personality dimensions measured in the study. APIM also took appropriate account of the degree of empirical interdependence in the dyad members' scores on all of the variables studied.

Research Hypotheses

The trait-specific hypotheses that I tested in the current study are based on the empirical precedents set by previous findings in the relevant research literature. Given the absence of previous research on the interrelationships of the various personality

traits used in the current study, no formal predictions were made regarding their combined impact on marital satisfaction for the current sample. However, the following trait-specific hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis 1.Marital satisfaction as a function of the actor's personality

My first goal for the current study was to examine marital satisfaction as a function of the *actor's* own personality traits. Based on the findings of previous research, I predicted that positive relationships would be found between marital satisfaction and the actors' scores on agreeableness, conscientiousness, psychological femininity and social absorption. On the other hand, I predicted that negative relationships would be found between marital satisfaction and the actors' scores on neuroticism, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment and social individuation.

Hypothesis 2. Marital satisfaction as a function of the partner's personality

My second goal for the current study was to examine marital satisfaction as a function of the *partners'* personality traits. Based on the findings of previous research, I predicted that positive relationships would be found between the actors' marital satisfaction and their partners' score on agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, psychological femininity and social absorption. On the other hand, I predicted that negative relationships would be found between the actors' marital satisfaction and their partners' scores on neuroticism, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and social individuation.

Hypothesis 3. Marital satisfaction as a function of the similarity or difference between the partners' personalities

My third goal for the current study was to examine marital satisfaction as a function of the absolute difference between partners' scores on the various traits that were measured. Based on the empirical precedents reviewed above, I predicted that the greater the difference between the partners on the traits of sensation seeking and sociosexuality, the more dissatisfied the couples will be. Given the absence of previous research on the influence of discrepant scores for the remaining traits assessed in the proposed study, no formal predictions were made for them.

Exploratory Analysis

Some researchers have suggested that traits might correlate differently with satisfaction at different stages of a relationship (Teichner & Farnden-Lyster, 1997; Watson et al, 2000). They have argued that one possible explanation for the mixed evidence with regard to many of the observed correlations between traits and satisfaction in earlier studies is that researchers did not assess the relationships between personality and satisfaction at different stages of a couple's relationship. Researchers who did differentiate based on the length of the relationship (and found significant differences for this variable) typically did so by comparing dating versus married couples (see Botwin et al, 1997; Watson et al, 2000). This is not a well-controlled comparison, however, because many people who date are not actively seeking, or are not even interested in seeking, a life partner. Thus, it cannot be presumed that the traits that individuals value in a dating partner are the same traits that they would value in a marriage partner.

Because the data collected in the current study are more appropriate to use in addressing this issue, I conducted a cross-sectional exploratory analysis to determine whether length of marriage does, in fact, moderate (1) the relationship between the partners' personality traits and their marital satisfaction, and (2) the similarity or dissimilarity of the partners' personalities.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

2.1 Participants and Procedure

Archival data were obtained from a private start-up dating website through the signed consent of the company's CEO. This company had previously contracted with a national survey firm to collect web-based survey data from 400 volunteer married couples ($N = 800$) who had registered with the online research firm. These couples were a subset of individuals who, prior to this study, had contracted with the online research firm to receive notices of all online studies that the research firm would conduct. Thus, the present sample consists of 400 pairs of married individuals who received an e-mail invitation directing them to the online survey. In return, all participants were entered into a drawing for 1 of 30 cash awards in the amount of $50 each.

After being directed to the survey's web address, the couples were given explicit instructions about how to complete the online survey. All participants were initially thanked for their willingness to participate in the survey. Each partner was then requested to complete his/her respective section independently of the other partner (i.e., without comparing or sharing answers) until both partners' surveys had been completed and submitted electronically. Each participant was given a personal access code to use when completing the online survey. The use of these unique codes enabled me to

identify each of the participants in the survey as a valid respondent, to match their data with their spouses' data, and to give them credit for completing the questionnaire. The anonymity of all participants was guaranteed by the research firm that had been hired to conduct the online survey.

2.2 Questionnaires

Each of the married couples responded to a 130-item internet survey. All scale items were answered using a four-point Likert format indicating the degree to which each item was characteristic of their typical behavior. The responses to the scale items ranged from 1 (*very uncharacteristic)* to 4 (*very characteristic),* with a high score indicating that the participant is high on the given trait.

Demographic Information. The participants were asked several questions relating to their age, ethnicity, income level, the number of years they have known their current spouse, the number of years they have been married to their current spouse, and their gender (see Appendix A).

Personality Measures. The following personality measures were included in the on-line survey, based on relevant theoretical considerations and/or their demonstrated utility in predicting marital satisfaction in the earlier studies I have reviewed above.

Big-Five Personality Scale. The survey included 25 items adapted from the public-domain International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) that are available at the Oregon Research Institute website. This measure assesses five factors: *openness to experience*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, and *neuroticism* (see Appendix B). The 25 items were chosen to try to optimize both the "bandwidth" of each

dimension (representing the content domain as broadly as possible) and the alpha value for each dimension (so that reliability of measurement would not be overly compromised).

An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed in SAS on the 25 items from the Big-Five Personality Scale. Five factors were extracted with the eigenvalues ranging from 4.72 (accounting for 19% of the total factor variance) to 1.58 (accounting for 6% of the total factor variance). In addition, the internal consistencies for each of the factors (using Cronbach's alpha) were as follows: openness to experience (α = .62 for females; α = .67 for males), conscientiousness (α = .73 for females; α = .75 for males), extraversion (α = .73 for females; α = .71 for males), agreeableness (α = .65 for females; α = .74 for males), and neuroticism (α = .84 for females; α = .82 for males).

Social Orientation Scale. The survey also included an 18-item measure that assesses the two orthogonal factors of *social absorption* (SA) and *social individuation* (SI) (see Ickes, Hutchison, & Mashek, 2004; see Appendix C). Items such as "I can get so absorbed in a conversation or a shared activity with someone that I forget everything else" defined the social absorption (SA) factor (9 items), which reflects the degree to which the respondents tend to *behaviorally* "merge" with others and become part of an intersubjective system. On the other hand, items such as "I like to have a clear sense of who I am dealing with, and how that person is different from me" defined the social individuation (SI) factor (9 items), which reflects the degree to which the respondents

tend to *cognitively* distinguish themselves from others and maintain a psychological separation from them.

An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed in SAS on the 18 items from the Social Orientation Scale. Using data collected from the 800 individuals in the present sample, two factors were extracted. All of the items loaded on their expected subscales (these factors were subsequently labeled social absorption (factor 1) and social individuation (factor 2). The eigenvalue for factor 1 was 4.79 (accounting for 27% of the total factor variance) and the eigenvalue for factor 2 was 3.01 (accounting for 17% of the total factor variance). The alpha value for the social absorption dimension was .87 for men and .88 for women. The alpha value for the social individuation dimension was .71 for men and .77 for women (These values are comparable to the ones typically obtained for the original 18-item Social Orientation Scale.).

New items were written for each of the following measures upon the request of the CEO of the internet dating website so that the company could maintain proprietary rights to the measures used on their site (see Appendix D).

Attachment Scale. The first scale developed for the dating website by William Ickes was an attachment scale that measured two relatively orthogonal dimensions of adult attachment. These two dimensions were *anxious attachment* (10 items; e.g., "I often worry that my romantic partners don't feel as strongly committed to me as I do to them.") and *avoidant attachment* (10 items; e.g., "I don't like to depend too much on my romantic partners or have them depend too much on me.").

Results from an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed the expected two factors of anxious attachment (factor 1) and avoidant attachment (factor 2). The eigenvalue for factor one was 4.15 (accounting for 21% of the total factor variance) and the eigenvalue for factor two was 3.23 (accounting for 16% of the total factor variance). The internal consistencies for each of the factors (using Cronbach's alpha) were as follows: anxious attachment (α = .83 for females; α = .80 for males), and avoidant attachment (α = .76 for females; α = .77 for males).

Sociosexual Orientation. The second scale developed for the dating website was a measure of sociosexuality. This scale, which contained 10 items (e.g., "I am open to having casual sex with someone if the mutual attraction is strong."), assesses individual differences in the willingness to engage in casual, non-committed sexual relations (see Simpson and Gangestad, 1991). Results from the exploratory factor analysis revealed one factor with an eigenvalue of 5.10 (accounting for 51% of the total factor variance). Cronbach's alpha for the current scale was .88 for females and .89 for males.

Psychological Masculinity and Psychological Femininity. The third scale developed for the dating website was a measure of sex roles. It is similar in intent to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), which measures two relatively independent dimensions of psychological masculinity (10 items, e.g., "I am assertive and forceful in the way I present myself.") and psychological femininity (10 items; e.g., "People feel that they can confide in me – that I am a good listener.").

This scale was also subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. It revealed the expected two factors of psychological masculinity (factor 1) and psychological

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femininity (factor 2). The eigenvalue for factor one was 4.42 (accounting for 22% of the total factor variance) and the eigenvalue for factor two was 5.55 (accounting for 28% of the total factor variance). The internal consistencies for each of the factors (using Cronbach's alpha) were as follows: psychological masculinity (α = .84 for females; α = .85 for males) and psychological femininity (α = .86 for females; α = .88 for males).

Sensation Seeking. The fourth, and final, scale developed for the dating website was a sensation seeking scale (20 items; e.g., "I can't stand to sit at home every evening – I have to get out and go somewhere."). It measures an individual's tendency to seek novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences (see Zuckerman, 1979). An exploratory factor analysis revealed one factor with an eigenvalue of 6.46 (accounting for 32% of the total factor variance). The alpha value for this scale was .86 for the female respondents and .88 for the males.

Measure of Relationship Quality

Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Eleven items from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) were used to assess marital satisfaction (see Appendix E). The complete version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) includes questions such as "How often do you and your partner quarrel?" and "Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?" Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the original 32-item scale was .96 (Spanier, 1976). In addition to having a high level of internal consistency, the DAS has been shown to have acceptable content, construct and criterion-related validity (see Spanier, 1976).

In the present study, the DAS was reduced to 11 items in order to include only the most representative items tapping different aspects of marital satisfaction, while still maintaining an acceptable level of scale reliability. An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed. It revealed the presence of one factor that accounted for 39% of the total factor variance and had an eigenvalue of 4.26. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the revised 11-item scale was .84 for the female respondents and .83 for the males.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

In the sections that follow, I first report the results of the major statistical tests performed on the data, with no regard to the specific research hypotheses proposed above. Following this nonselective review of the results, I then report the results of the more targeted analyses that I conducted in order to test my specific research hypotheses. Readers who are interested only in the results of the targeted hypothesis tests should skip to , where the results of these analyses are reported.

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

On average, the age range of the participants was 35-44 ($n = 310$). Of the remaining participants, 275 were between 25-34 years old and 215 were between 45-54 years old. The participants were predominantly White/Caucasian ($n = 736$). However, a small minority of participants were Latino, Asian, and Black (combined $n = 64$ participants). According to their category choice for length of marriage, the average couple in the survey had been married in the range of 10-14 years.

3.2 Scale Refinement, Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences

The data for each of the measures used in the current study were first examined for instances of out-of-bound values and missing data (none were detected), and also to ensure that the assumptions of normality were met. Next, for each scale, item analyses

were conducted in which I correlated the scores for each scale item with the total scale score, and those items correlating less than .30 were deleted. This procedure reduced the number of items used in the subsequent analyses from 130 to 128 items[1]. Descriptive statistics for each of the scales are presented in Table 1, which also includes the results of matched-sample *t*-tests used to test the mean-level gender differences between the husbands and wives.

For the current sample, significant gender differences were obtained for openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, sensation seeking, psychological masculinity, psychological femininity, and sociosexuality. Specifically, wives reported higher levels of openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and psychological femininity compared to their husbands. On the other hand, the husbands reported higher levels of sensation seeking, psychological masculinity, and sociosexuality than their wives. No gender difference was found for the measure of marital satisfaction.

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[1] Specifically, item #18 was removed from the Psychological Masculinity Scale and item #16 was removed from the Psychological Femininity Scale. This brought the total number of items used to define the scales to 128.

Table 3.1. *Alpha Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Husbands and Wives for all Scales and Gender Differences*

	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Effect Size	
Scale	α	α	*M* (SD)	*M* (SD)	*d*	*r*
Big Five Scale						
Openness to Experience	.62	.67	14.06 (2.87)	14.80 (2.50)**	-.27	-.13
Conscientiousness	.73	.75	14.74 (3.24)	15.19 (2.87)*	-.15	-.07
Extraversion	.73	.71	13.23 (3.19)	12.88 (3.03)	.11	.06
Agreeableness	.65	.74	13.88 (2.92)	14.37 (2.40)*	-.18	-.09
Neuroticism	.84	.82	10.16 (3.48)	11.84 (3.49)**	-.48	-.23
Sensation Seeking	.86	.88	49.39 (11.02)	42.40 (8.94)**	.70	.33
Psychological Masculinity	.85	.86	29.28 (5.43)	27.71 (5.33)**	.29	.14
Psychological Femininity	.87	.89	29.74 (4.99)	33.96 (3.96)**	-.94	-.42
Social Absorption	.87	.88	27.02 (5.20)	26.97 (5.13)	.02	.01
Social Individuation	.71	.77	23.98 (4.32)	24.42 (3.99)	-.11	-.05
Anxious Attachment	.83	.80	21.20 (5.80)	21.71 (6.04)	-.08	-.04
Avoidant Attachment	.76	.77	22.34 (5.15)	22.20 (5.09)	.03	.01
Sociosexuality	.88	.89	14.67 (5.42)	13.52 (4.57)**	.23	.11
Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)	.84	.83	42.31 (5.49)	42.67 (5.58)	-.07	-.03

Note: N = 800 (400 males, 400 females). For all scales, a high score indicates that the dyad member is high on that trait.

** $p < .0001$, *$p < .05$: results of matched pairs *t*-test

Within-Partner Correlations

Within-partner correlations among the various measures used in this study were computed separately for the men and the women[2] using Pearson's product-moment correlations. The convergent/divergent validity data from these correlations are presented in Table 2.

The pattern of zero-order correlations for the female respondents revealed that women's marital satisfaction score was significantly related to the women's scores on the following variables: conscientiousness ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), extraversion ($r = .14$, $p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), neuroticism ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$), psychological femininity ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), social absorption ($r = .49$, $p < .01$), social individuation ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$), anxious attachment ($r = -.51$, $p < .01$), avoidant attachment ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$), and sociosexuality ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$).

Displaying a generally similar pattern of zero-order correlations, the men's marital satisfaction score was significantly related to the men's scores on the following variables: conscientiousness ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .26$, $p < .01$), neuroticism ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$), sensation seeking ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$), psychological

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[2] For an overall within-partner and/or cross-partner correlation to be a legitimate summary of the linear relationship between two variables, there should be equal variance across the variables between men and women and their population covariance must be equal (Gonzalez & Griffin, 1999). Because there was a difference in the variance and covariance matrices for all of the variables except psychological femininity, anxious and avoidant attachment, social absorption, social individuation, and marital satisfaction, overall pooling was not found to be appropriate and, thus, the conceptual focus, when appropriate, will be on the differences between the types of partners.

Table 3.2. *Within-Partner Correlations between Personality and Marital Satisfaction Scale Scores for Husbands and Wives.*

Husbands above diagonal; **Wives below diagonal.**	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Sensation Seeking	Psychological Masculinity	Psychological Femininity	Social Absorption	Social Individuation	Anxious Attachment	Avoidant Attachment	Sociosexuality	Marital Satisfaction
Openness to Experience	1.00	.04	*.26*	**.16**	*-.14*	*.25*	*.17*	*.31*	*.34*	-.03	-.02	*-.26*	-.03	.09
Conscientiousness	-.02	1.00	.08	**.11**	*-.34*	.01	*.28*	*.18*	*.13*	.09	*-.31*	-.06	-.04	*.27*
Extraversion	*.40*	.12	1.00	**.13**	*-.28*	*.35*	*.32*	*.23*	*.15*	.02	**-.12**	*-.15*	.03	.06
Agreeableness	.09	.08	*.16*	1.00	*-.40*	-.03	*-.25*	*.52*	*.16*	**-.11**	*-.21*	*-.12*	*-.14*	*.26*
Neuroticism	**-.10**	*-.16*	*-.29*	*-.34*	1.00	-.09	*-.13*	*-.23*	*-.18*	.15	*.47*	*.10*	*.21*	*-.35*
Sensation Seeking	*.34*	-.01	*.30*	-.04	-.05	1.00	*.32*	.04	*.12*	.05	**.10**	.01	*.20*	*-.14*
Psychological Masculinity	*.30*	*.13*	*.47*	*-.19*	*-.10*	*.32*	1.00	-.07	*.13*	*.14*	-.08	-.01	.06	.03
Psychological Femininity	*.18*	*.19*	*.25*	*.38*	*-.10*	-.09	-.00	1.00	*.49*	.04	*-.13*	*-.33*	*-.19*	*.31*
Social Absorption	*.14*	*.12*	*.14*	*.17*	-.08	-.01	.00	*.35*	1.00	-.10	*-.13*	*-.63*	*-.30*	*.45*
Social Individuation	-.02	*.13*	.05	-.09	.08	.07	**.10**	*.12*	-.01	1.00	*.29*	*.31*	*.19*	*-.22*
Anxious Attachment	-.02	*-.23*	*-.19*	*-.31*	*.52*	**.10**	-.04	*-.14*	*-.16*	*.24*	1.00	**.09**	*.30*	*-.54*
Avoidant Attachment	*-.15*	-.03	**-.10**	-.04	-.02	.06	-.01	*-.18*	*-.52*	*.30*	.03	1.00	*.30*	*-.31*
Sociosexuality	.05	-.08	.02	-.08	.08	*.26*	.03	*-.20*	*-.19*	*.14*	*.23*	*.22*	1.00	*-.43*
Marital Satisfaction	.01	*.19*	*.14*	*.31*	*-.30*	-.01	-.00	*.20*	*.49*	*-.19*	*-.51*	*-.32*	*-.30*	1.00

*all **boldfaced** correlations significant at .05 level (***boldfaced, italicized*** correlations significant at .01 level)

femininity ($r = .31, p < .01$), social absorption ($r = .45, p < .01$), social individuation ($r = -.22, p < .01$), anxious attachment ($r = -.54, p < .01$), avoidant attachment ($r = -.31, p < .01$), and sociosexuality ($r = -.43, p < .01$).

Between-Partner Correlations

Next, cross-partner correlations between husbands' and wives' personality and marital satisfaction scores were computed and are presented in Table 3. These patterns of zero-order correlation revealed that the women's marital satisfaction scores were significantly related to their husband's scores on the following personality variables: conscientiousness ($r = .27, p < .01$) agreeableness ($r = .16, p < .01$), neuroticism ($r = -.24, p < .01$), sensation seeking ($r = -.11, p < .05$), psychological femininity ($r = .29, p < .01$), social absorption ($r = .38, p < .01$), social individuation ($r = -.14, p < .01$), anxious attachment ($r = -.43, p < .01$), avoidant attachment ($r = -.25, p < .01$), and sociosexuality ($r = -.35, p < .01$).

On the other hand, the husbands' marital satisfaction scores were significantly related as zero-order correlations to their wives' scores on the following personality variables: conscientiousness ($r = .11, p < .05$), extraversion ($r = .12, p < .05$), agreeableness ($r = .19, p < .01$), neuroticism ($r = -.26, p < .01$), psychological femininity ($r = .14, p < .01$), social absorption ($r = .34, p < .01$), social individuation ($r = -.17, p < .01$), anxious attachment ($r = -.46, p < .01$), avoidant attachment ($r = -.24, p < .01$), and sociosexuality ($r = -.15, p < .01$). The men's and women's marital satisfaction scores were also strongly correlated with each other ($r = .73, p < .01$),

indicating a high level of between-partner similarity in the partners' reported levels of marital satisfaction.

Using Intraclass Correlations to Examine Partner Similarity

To examine the degree of similarity in the personalities of the marriage partners in the current sample, I used the intraclass correlation (ICC; Kenny and La Voie, 1985). The ICC provides the researcher with a measure of the *absolute similarity* between dyad members on a given variable. If the ICC is significantly different from zero, then there is evidence of non-independence in the form of a significant level of group-level variance. A positive intraclass correlation indicates that dyad members are more similar than non-dyad members and that there is less variation within dyads than between them. This correlation is interpreted as the percentage of variance in the measure that is at the group level. A negative intraclass correlation indicates greater-than-chance dissimilarity between dyad members and usually occurs when the between-group variation is less than the within-group variation, indicating that a third (control) variable may be present.

The intraclass correlations of the husbands' and wives' personality scores and of their marital satisfaction scale scores are reported in Table 4. The intraclass correlations of the husbands' and wives' personality traits ranged from less than 1 percent to 73 percent, with the husbands and wives being similar to a significant extent in their levels of openness to experience (19%), sensation seeking (9%), social absorption (42%), social individuation (38%), anxious attachment (39%), and sociosexuality (43%). The husbands and wives were also found to be highly similar in their reported marital satisfaction (73%).

Table 3.3. *Cross-partner Correlations between Husbands' and Wives' Personality and Marital Satisfaction Scale Scores.*

Husbands (columns) Wives (rows)	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Sensation Seeking	Psychological Masculinity	Psychological Femininity	Social Absorption	Social Individuation	Anxious Attachment	Avoidant Attachment	Sociosexuality	Marital Satisfaction
Openness to Experience	*.21*	-.03	.00	-.01	-.05	.02	.07	.05	.06	*-.31*	-.08	-.05	.05	.04
Conscientiousness	.00	.01	.03	.04	-.01	-.03	.06	**.10**	*.16*	**.11**	.04	*-.12*	-.05	**.11**
Extraversion	.08	.07	.01	.02	-.06	.04	.07	*.17*	*.13*	.02	**-.10**	**-.10**	.01	**.12**
Agreeableness	.07	.04	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	**.10**	**.10**	*.17*	-.05	**-.11**	*-.15*	-.08	*.19*
Neuroticism	.00	-.08	.03	-.05	.03	.10	-.02	**-.12**	*-.13*	.03	*.20*	.06	**.11**	*-.26*
Sensation Seeking	*.15*	.05	**.12**	.08	-.06	*.23*	.09	.03	.05	-.01	.01	.03	**.12**	.02
Psychological Masculinity	.05	-.05	-.01	.06	-.04	.02	-.05	.08	.04	-.03	.06	.01	.05	.01
Psychological Femininity	.04	.02	.02	*-.13*	.07	-.03	*.16*	*.16*	*.23*	*.16*	-.02	*-.14*	**-.11**	*.14*
Social Absorption	*.18*	*.16*	.08	.04	*-.13*	.06	**.12**	*.22*	*.42*	-.02	*-.18*	*-.21*	*-.22*	*.34*
Social Individuation	-.04	-.09	.02	.01	*.12*	-.03	-.00	.03	-.02	*.38*	*.25*	.06	*.18*	*-.17*
Anxious Attachment	-.01	*-.13*	.04	-.04	*.18*	*.21*	.03	*-.21*	*-.25*	*.23*	*.39*	*.25*	*.38*	*-.46*
Avoidant Attachment	*-.14*	*-.15*	-.04	-.03	*.16*	-.04	-.08	*-.13*	*-.19*	.04	*.17*	.08	*.15*	*-.24*
Sociosexuality	.04	-.04	.07	.00	.01	**.12**	.05	-.04	**-.11**	.04	*.14*	*.14*	*.46*	*-.15*
Marital Satisfaction	.08	*.27*	.02	*.16*	*-.24*	**-.11**	.05	*.29*	*.38*	*-.14*	*-.43*	*-.25*	*-.35*	*.73*

*all **boldfaced** correlations significant at .05 level (***boldfaced, italicized*** correlations significant at .01 level)

A better way to calculate the absolute similarity between heterosexual partners is to use a partial pairwise intraclass correlation that controls for the within-dyad gender variable when testing for nonindependence. In the present sample, these partial intraclass correlations ranged from less than 1% to 73%, resulting in similar values as the previous intraclass correlations. The minimal change in the intraclass correlations for the majority of the variables suggests that gender did not moderate the relationship between partners' scores on a given trait. Several of the negative correlations disappeared, however, after gender was partialled out. For example, the intraclass correlation for psychological femininity was -1%, however, after partialling out gender, the intraclass correlation increased to 15%. Similarly, the intraclass correlation for neuroticism was -3%, but after partialling out gender, this correlation increased to 3%. Finally, the partial intraclass correlation increased relative to the zero-order ICC for several additional variables, including openness to experience (19% to 21%), sensation seeking (9% to 23%), and sociosexuality (43% to 45%).

Table 3.4. *Intraclass Correlations Between Husbands' and Wives'*
Personality and Marital Satisfaction Scale Scores.

Measure	Intraclass Correlation	Partial Intraclass Correlation (partial gender)
Openness to Experience	.187**	.209**
Conscientiousness	.008	.012
Extraversion	.005	.007
Agreeableness	-.032	-.025
Neuroticism	-.026	.029*
Sensation Seeking	.086*	.228**
Psychological Masculinity	-.098	-.052
Psychological Femininity	-.010	.154**
Social Absorption	.421**	.420**
Social Individuation	.381**	.384**
Anxious Attachment	.393**	.393**
Avoidant Attachment	.078	.077
Sociosexuality	.428**	.448**
Marital Satisfaction	.725**	.726**

** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

Partner Similarity and Marital Satisfaction

The next sets of zero-order correlations index the relationship between the partners' absolute difference scores for each of the personality variables and both their dyad-level and individual-level (i.e., self-reported) marital satisfaction scores. The absolute difference scores were obtained by subtracting the wife's score on a given

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personality dimension from her husband's score on the same personality dimension, and then dropping the sign (+ or -) of this difference. This score indexes the degree of absolute discrepancy between the partners' scores on a given trait. The correlations reported in Table 5 indicate the zero-order relationships between the size of these personality difference scores and marital satisfaction.

These results indicated that the greater the discrepancy in the partners' scores on conscientiousness, psychological femininity, social absorption, anxious and avoidant attachment, sociosexuality and marital satisfaction, the lower their reported dyad-level satisfaction. In other words, there is a significant relationship between how similar the dyad members are on these personality variables and their marital satisfaction, such that greater similarity is related to greater dyad-level satisfaction.

Several important gender differences emerged in the data for individual-level (i.e., self-reported) marital satisfaction. For men, greater discrepancy between their score and their wife's score on the variables of sensation seeking, psychological femininity, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality was related to lower levels of self-reported marital satisfaction. For women, on the other hand, greater discrepancy between their score and their husband's score on the variables of social absorption, avoidant attachment, and sociosexuality was related to lower levels of self-reported marital satisfaction. The reader should be cautioned that these are zero-order correlations that do not take into account potential overlap among the various personality predictor variables.

Table 3.5. *Correlations of the Absolute Difference Scores between Dyad Member's Personality Traits with the Dyad-level Outcome* Mea*sure of Marital Satisfaction (DYDAS) and with Partner's Individual Marital Satisfaction Scores.*

	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Sensation Seeking	Psychological Masculinity	Psychological Femininity	Social Absorption	Social Individuation	Anxious Attachment	Avoidant Attachment	Sociosexuality	Marital Satisfaction
DYDAS	.01	***-.19***	-.07	-.01	-.09	-.05	-.02	***-.21***	***-.25***	-.08	***-.18***	***-.22***	***-.37***	***-.27***
M	-.01	-.08	-.04	-.08	-.08	**-.10**	-.09	***-.17***	-.05	-.09	**-.11**	-.06	***-.18***	***-.16***
F	.02	-.06	-.01	.07	.01	.06	.07	.01	***-.14***	.03	-.02	**-.10**	**-.11**	-.04

*all **boldfaced** correlations significant at .05 level (***boldfaced, italicized*** correlations significant at .01 level)

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3.4 The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)

The primary goal of the current study was to examine the role of personality traits in predicting the marital satisfaction of heterosexual couples. In order to determine what combination of traits from the 13 personality domains account for the largest amount of variance in marital satisfaction, a special statistical technique was needed that will take into account the degree of empirical interdependence in the marriage partners' responses.

The model I chose to use for this purpose is the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, which can be run using the PROC MIXED statement in SAS (APIM; Campbell & Kashy, 2002). In this model, each dyad is treated as a group of two individuals, so respondents are nested within their dyad. The APIM model enables the researcher to separate the effects of the "actor" from that of the "partner." It assumes that a person's score on a given outcome measure can be affected by the same person's score on a given predictor variable (an actor effect). It further assumes that a person's score on a given outcome measure can also be affected his or her partner's score on the same predictor variable (a partner effect).

Finally, the APIM model also allows for tests of interactions between the actor's and the partner's score on a given predictor variable. According to Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006, p. 9), the interaction term can take different forms—all of them valid as a test of the "interaction effect." Most commonly, the interaction will take the typical product form (i.e., multiplicative form). However, given an appropriate theoretical rationale, it can also be represented as the absolute difference between the dyad

members' scores on a given predictor variable, as is the case when the researcher believes that the similarity/dissimilarity on a given trait is important (see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006, p. 9).

The kinds of variables included in the data set must be considered before the researcher is justified in conducting dyadic analyses using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model. Three kinds of variables are relevant to this decision. A between-dyad variable is one for which the scores are the same for both members of a given dyad, but different from dyad to dyad (e.g., length of marriage). A within-dyad variable is one for which the scores between dyad-members are different, but their average score is same for all dyad members (e.g., gender). The third type of variable is the mixed predictor variable for which there is variation both within-dyad and between-dyad (e.g., the partners' scores on the traits of anxious and avoidant attachment). It is important to note that actor and partner effects can be estimated for mixed predictor variables and for interactions between mixed variables and between- or within- dyad variables. However, these effects *cannot* be estimated for purely between-dyad variables (Campbell and Kashy, 2002, p. 329).

The Satterthwaite approximation is specified in SAS to estimate the degrees of freedom (*df*) that are available for the observed level of dyadic interdependence. This approximation arrives at a *df* that is somewhere between the number of individuals in the study and the number of dyads (Campbell & Kashy, 2002). In general, a large difference in the sample variance between the predictor and the outcome measure results in degrees of freedom that are closer to the number of individuals, whereas a

smaller difference in the sample variance between the predictor and outcome measure typically results in degrees of freedom that are closer to the number of dyads (Satterthwaite, 1946).

Statistically, R^2 values and effect sizes estimates are not directly available through the output produced by PROC MIXED. However, estimates of these statistics can be computed using the formulas provided by Kenny, Kashy and Cook (2006, p. 21, 39-41). The R^2 estimate is obtained by using the following formula: $1 - \{(CS + RES) / (CS' + RES')\}$, where CS is the compound symmetry term and RES is the residual error variance. The prime associated with the CS and RES in the denominator refers to the unrestricted model, that is, a model without any of the predictor variables included. The calculations for the effect size estimates are more complex and are presented in detail by Kenny, Kashy and Cook (2006). It is important to note that these formulas enable the researcher to obtain an *estimate* of the effect sizes, after controlling for both the multicollinearity among the predictor variables and the level of nonindependence in the dyad members' responses.

3.5 Tests of the Specific Research Hypotheses

Tests of Hypotheses 1 and 2.

The first two hypotheses were proposed to (1) examine the relationship between an individual's marital satisfaction and his/her own personality traits (actor effects), and to (2) examine the actor's marital satisfaction as a function of his/her *partner's* personality (partner effects). Based on empirical precedents, my first hypothesis predicted that a positive relationship would be found between an individual's marital

satisfaction and his/her scores on the dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, psychological femininity, and social absorption. On the other hand, I predicted that a negative relationship would be found between marital satisfaction and the individual's scores on the dimensions of neuroticism, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and social individuation.

Based again on empirical precedents, my second hypothesis predicted that a positive relationship would be found between an individual's marital satisfaction and his/her *partner's* scores on the dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, psychological femininity, and social absorption. On the other hand, I predicted that a negative relationship would be found between an individual's marital satisfaction and his/her *partner's* scores on the dimensions of neuroticism, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and social individuation.

To test these predictions, an APIM analysis was conducted using PROC MIXED in SAS in which the dependent variable was the actor's marital satisfaction score. The predictor variables were both the actor's scores and the partner's scores on each of the 13 personality dimensions assessed. All of the predictor variables were centered prior to these analyses, based on mean scores calculated for the entire sample. The model's predictors also included the actor's gender, the interaction between the actor's gender and each of the actor effects, and the interactions between the partner's gender and each of the partner effects. Whereas the main effect for the actor's gender tests whether a person's gender directly influenced his or her level of marital satisfaction, the

interactions test whether any of the effects of the remaining predictors were significantly different for the husbands and wives in the sample.

The results of this omnibus APIM model revealed significant *actor effects* for openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, social absorption, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality. Specifically, high scores for the *actor* on the traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and social absorption were associated with higher levels of satisfaction, whereas high scores for the *actor* on the traits of openness, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality were associated with lower levels of satisfaction. In other words, the actors who reported the greatest satisfaction in their marriages saw themselves as being reliable, supportive, and understanding in their relationships and reported a preference to engage in sexual relations only with committed partners. Furthermore, individuals who reported the greatest satisfaction were those who exhibited a secure attachment style (i.e., were more likely to give their partners the benefit of the doubt and remain loyal and supportive in times of stress. Finally, the more satisfied "actors" were also disposed to become highly interdependent with their interaction partners (i.e., they were high in social absorption), and therefore likely to enjoy engaging in activities as a married couple.

The results also revealed significant *partner effects* for psychological femininity, anxious attachment and social absorption. Specifically, higher scores for the *partner* on the traits of psychological femininity and social absorption were associated with higher levels of the actor's satisfaction, whereas higher scores for the *partner* on the trait of anxious attachment was associated with lower levels of the actor's satisfaction. In other

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words, the actors who reported the greatest satisfaction in their marriages were those whose partners were sensitive, caring, and likely to express an affective concern for the actor's welfare.

The most satisfied individuals were also those whose partners exhibited a secure attachment style. In other words, the partners of these individuals were likely to give their partners the benefit of the doubt and to remain loyal and supportive in times of stress.. Finally, individuals were also satisfied to the extent that their partners enjoyed being a part of an interdependent relationship, although this "main effect" was qualified by an interaction that will be reported below (See Table 6 for the results related to this APIM analysis).

In support of Hypothesis 1, the APIM analysis clearly linked agreeableness, conscientiousness, social absorption, and anxious attachment to marital satisfaction, and in the predicted directions. On the other hand, although the zero-order correlational data suggest that psychological femininity is positively related to satisfaction, and that neuroticism, avoidant attachment, and social individuation are all negatively related to satisfaction, the results from this individual-level regression analysis did not confirm my predictions that these variables would be both significant and incrementally unique predictors of relationship satisfaction.

In support of Hypothesis 2, the APIM analysis clearly linked the actor's marital satisfaction to his/her partner's score on psychological femininity, anxious attachment and social absorption, and in the predicted direction. On the other hand, I did not find evidence for significant and incrementally unique links between the actor's satisfaction

and his/her partner's score on agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, neuroticism, avoidant attachment, or social individuation, as I had predicted.

The results of the omnibus APIM model also revealed two significant interaction effects. The first interaction, when predicting an individual's marital satisfaction, was between the actor's sensation seeking score and his or her gender. As depicted in Figure 1, men who scored low (versus high) in sensation seeking reported higher levels of satisfaction with their marriage, whereas women who scored low (versus high) in sensation seeking reported greater dissatisfaction with their marriage. Interpreting this effect might require, however, that I also examine what form it takes when the absolute difference in the male and female partner's sensation seeking is used as the (alternative) interaction term. Accordingly, the results of that analysis are reported below.
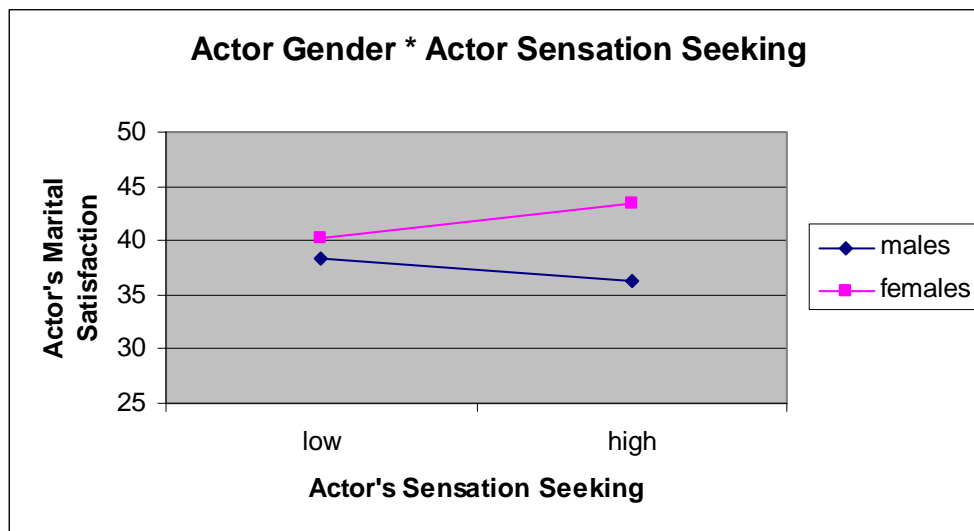

Figure 3.1. Actor's Marital Satisfaction as a Function of the Interaction
Between the Actor's Gender and His/Her Score on Sensation Seeking

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The second significant interaction effect that emerged in the omnibus APIM model involved the partner's sensation seeking score and the partner's gender (see Figure 2). It revealed that men whose wives scored high on sensation seeking reported low satisfaction with their marriage, whereas women whose husbands scored high on sensation seeking reported being relatively satisfied with their marriage. As before, however, interpreting this effect might require that I also examine what form it takes when the absolute difference in the male and female partner's sensation seeking is used as the interaction term. Accordingly, the results of that analysis are also reported below.
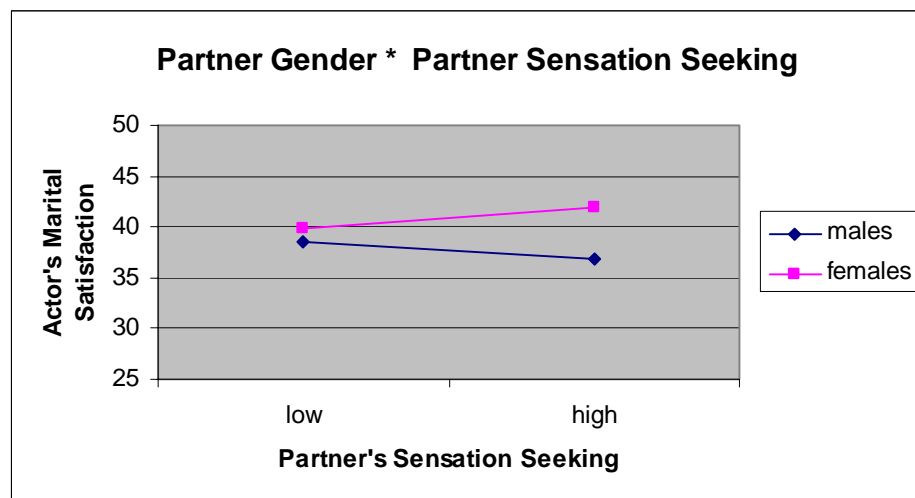
Figure 3.2. Actor's Marital Satisfaction as a Function of the Interaction Between the Partner's Gender and the Partner's Score on Sensation Seeking

The output from the omnibus APIM model also enabled me to examine the partial intraclass correlation between the dyad members' satisfaction scores (i.e., the degree to which the partners are similarly satisfied or dissatisfied), after controlling for all of the predictor variables included in the model. The partial intraclass correlation can be estimated using the compound symmetry (CS) estimate and the model residual.

Specifically, the ratio of the CS to the sum of the CS and residual indicates the partners' similarity in their self-reported marital satisfaction. In the current omnibus model, the intraclass correlation between partners' marital satisfaction was .54. Thus, even after controlling for both partners' scores on openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, psychological femininity, psychological masculinity, sensation seeking, social absorption, social individuation, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, sociosexuality, and gender, the partners' marital satisfaction scores were still strongly correlated.

Finally, the estimate of R^2 for the current model was: $1 - \{(7.450 + 6.331) / (22.174 + 8.444)\} = .5499$. This estimate suggests that approximately 55% of the variance in an individual's marital satisfaction can be accounted for by the current set of predictors. It is important to note, however, that the combined R^2 might prove to be somewhat less in replication studies because of features that are unique to the present data set.

Table 3.6. *Predicting Marital Satisfaction Using Actor and Partner Main Effects and Gender Interactions*

Predictor	ACTOR				PARTNER				INTERACTION			
	Beta	df	F statistic	adjusted d	Beta	df	F statistic	adjusted d	Beta	df	F statistic	adjusted d
Gender (AGEN)	2.08	402	1.18	.10								
Openness to Experience	-.15	691	7.52**	.23	-.07	693	1.76	.11				
Conscientiousness	.13	608	6.65**	.20	.09	606	3.25	.14				
Extraversion	-.04	601	.45	.05	-.07	602	1.70	.10				
Agreeableness	.27	646	17.72***	.31	.05	644	.57	.06				
Neuroticism	-.02	597	.23	.04	-.04	598	.49	.06				
Sensation Seeking	.01	688	.34	.05	<.01	687	.06	.02				
Actor SS*Actor Gender									-.06	561	8.94**	.12
Partner SS*Partner Gender									-.04	562	4.30*	.08
Psychological Masculinity	.03	603	.37	.05	.04	605	.47	.05				
Psychological Femininity	-.03	691	.53	.06	.09	681	4.10*	.17				
Social Absorption	.30	722	75.89***	.78	.09	720	6.62**	.22				
Social Individuation	-.05	743	1.81	.12	-.01	743	.06	.02				
Anxious Attachment	-.38	706	78.02***	.79	-.22	706	26.46***	.46				
Avoidant Attachment	-.08	617	1.55	.10	-.07	613	1.11	.09				
Sociosexuality	-.18	769	28.84***	.46	.05	769	2.08	.12				
Model R^2	.55											

Note. N = 800. Only significant interactions are displayed.

***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05

Test of Hypothesis 3.

      The third hypothesis was proposed based on empirical precedents suggesting that there would be significant relationships between marital satisfaction and the degree of similarity/dissimilarity between spouses for at least two of the 13 personality predictors that were included in this study. Specifically, I predicted that greater absolute differences between the partners' scores on sensation seeking and sociosexuality would result in lower levels of self-reported marital satisfaction.

      To test these predictions, a second APIM analysis was conducted. Once again, the dependent variable was the actor's marital satisfaction score. However, in this model, the actor's gender and both the actor's and partner's scores on the personality variables were first entered as control variables, followed by the absolute difference scores between the dyad members for each of the personality traits. As mentioned earlier, the absolute difference scores were obtained by subtracting the wife's score on a given personality dimension from her husband's score on the same personality dimension and then using the unsigned (absolute) value of this difference as the predictor variable.

      The results of this second APIM analysis revealed significant *actor effects* for openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, anxious attachment, social absorption and sociosexuality (these actor effects are identical to those observed in the first APIM model). Specifically, higher scores for the *actor* on the traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and social absorption were associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction, whereas higher scores for the *actor* on the traits of

openness to experience, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality were associated with lower levels of satisfaction. (See Table 7 for the detailed results of this analysis).

The results of this same APIM analysis also revealed significant *partner effects* for extraversion, psychological femininity, anxious attachment, social absorption, and sociosexuality. Specifically, higher scores for the *partner* on the traits of psychological femininity and social absorption were associated with higher levels of the actor's satisfaction, whereas higher scores for the *partner* on the traits of extraversion, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality were associated with lower levels of the actor's satisfaction (See Table 7 for these results as well).

I also found a significant effect of the absolute difference between dyad member's scores on social individuation. Specifically, the greater the difference in partners' scores on social individuation, the lower the actor's reported marital satisfaction. In other words, similarity with respect to social individuation was associated with greater marital satisfaction. No additional effects of partner similarity were evident in the data from this study.

For the second APIM model, the partial intraclass correlation between the dyad member's satisfaction scores was .53. This finding indicates that after controlling for the actor and partner main effects on the 13 personality domains, the main effect of gender, and after controlling for partner similarity on the 13 personality traits, marital satisfaction scores for the two members of each couple remained strongly correlated. Lastly, the estimate of R^2 for the current model was: $1 - \{(7.752 + 6.744) / (22.239 +$

8.444)} = .5276. In other words, approximately 53% of the variance in an individual's

marital satisfaction can be accounted for by the current set of predictors.

Table 3.7. *Predicting Marital Satisfaction Using Actor and Partner Main Effects and Absolute Difference Trait Scores*

Predictor	ACTOR				PARTNER				INTERACTION (Absolute Difference Scores)			
	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*
Gender (AGEN)	-.25	386	3.67	.20								
Openness to Experience	-.13	643	5.39*	.21	-.05	645	.66	.07				
Conscientiousness	.12	564	5.96**	.21	.08	562	2.73	.14				
Extraversion	-.08	554	1.91	.12	-.12	554	4.59*	.18				
Agreeableness	.25	598	15.53***	.31	.04	596	.40	.05				
Neuroticism	-.01	556	.05	.02	-.03	556	.42	.06				
Sensation Seeking	<.01	621	.04	.02	.01	621	.07	.02				
Psychological Masculinity	.05	556	.80	.07	.06	556	1.33	.09				
Psychological Femininity	-.04	610	.60	.07	.09	602	3.71*	.17				
Social Absorption	.31	666	74.52***	.83	.09	667	6.24**	.24				
Social Individuation	-.04	692	1.09	.10	.01	693	.02	.01				
Absolute Difference in Partner's SI Scores									-.13	374	4.12*	.20
Anxious Attachment	-.40	649	82.20***	.89	-.23	649	27.48***	.50				
Avoidant Attachment	-.06	571	.92	.08	-.06	567	.81	.08				
Sociosexuality	-.13	651	11.77***	.33	.08	652	4.90*	.21				
Model R^2	.53											

Note. $N = 800$. Only significant interactions are displayed.
***p < .001;   **p < .01;   *p < .05

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Post Hoc Test of Hypothesis 3. As discussed earlier, social interaction is the "raw material" of which close relationships are made. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that interactions between at least some interactions between marriage partners' personality scores will significantly influence the quality of their marriage. Consistent with most of the precedents in the research literature, I initially chose to examine the impact on marital satisfaction of partner similarity/dissimilarity on the 13 personality constructs that were measured in this study. Because I found only one significant interaction of this type (i.e., for social individuation), I wondered if testing a different type of interaction term might yield a larger number of significant effects. To answer this question, I re-examined the issue of potential "personality interactions" by using the product of the actor's and partner's scores on a given personality trait as my interaction term, to see what additional insights might be gained by using this alternative measure of the actor X partner interaction.

As before, I was interested in determining if the interaction between the actor and partner's trait scores had an influence on marital satisfaction that made a unique contribution beyond the additive effect of their individual personalities. In order to test whether the addition of the interaction (product) terms significantly improved the fit of the model, I ran two APIM analyses in which the dependent variable, once again, was the actor's marital satisfaction scores. In the "main effects only model," I included as my predictor variables the actor and partner scale scores for each of the 13 trait domains. Then, in the more complex "main effects plus interactions" model, I again included as my predictor variables the actor and partner scale scores for each of the 13

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trait domains, but also included the interaction terms (i.e., the product of the actor's and partner's scores) for each of the 13 trait dimensions. The actor's gender was also included as a covariate, as were the interactions between gender and all the actor and partner "main effects".

By specifying the maximum likelihood estimation when running PROC MIXED in SAS for the two models, I could subtract the -2 log likelihood value for the more complex main-effects-plus-interactions model from that of the main-effects-only model (see Campbell & Kashy, 2002, p. 332). This yielded the likelihood ratio test statistic. The significance of this statistic was determined by comparing the likelihood ratio to a chi-square distribution whose degrees of freedom equaled the number of additional predictors in the more complex model. If the resulting p value is lower than the predetermined alpha level, then that outcome would indicate that the more complex model provides a superior fit (Campbell & Kashy, 2002).

Results from both the main effects model and the more complex model are summarized in Table 8. The main-effects-only model yielded findings very similar to the ones obtained from the first APIM analysis which was computed to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. In particular, the actor's marital satisfaction was positively associated with the actor's own scores on conscientiousness, agreeableness, and social absorption. On the other hand, the actor's marital satisfaction was negatively associated with the actor's own scores on openness to experience, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality. I also found a significant effect for the actor's gender, such that the wives reported relatively

higher satisfaction (after controlling for the remaining predictor variables) compared to their husbands.

The inclusion of the interaction terms resulted in changes in the parameter values for the "main effect" predictors and in significant actor X partner interaction effects for social absorption, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment. The interaction effect for avoidant attachment can, perhaps, best be explained in terms of the similarity effect. That is, dyads in which both partners were similar – either both high or both low in avoidant attachment – reported relatively higher satisfaction compared to dyads in which the partners were dissimilar (see Figure 3).
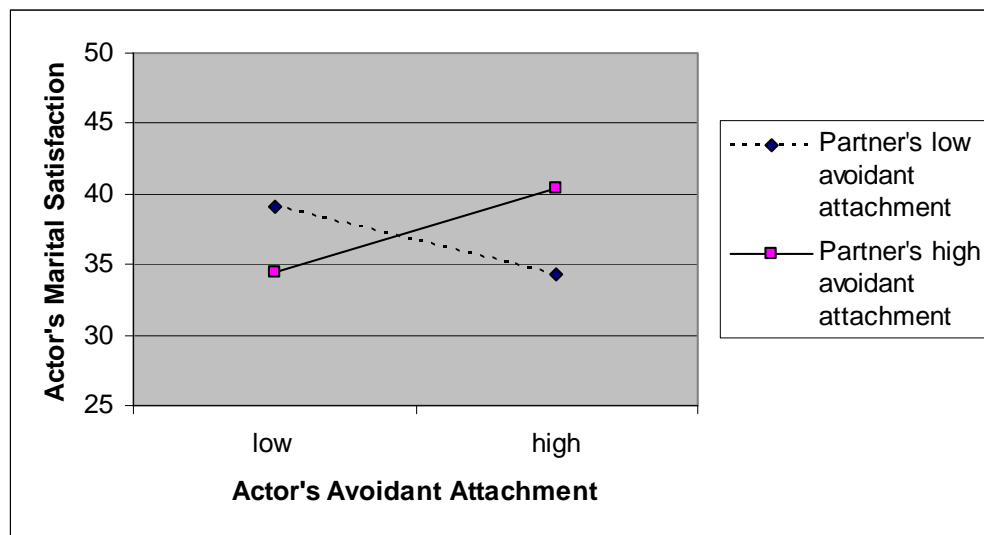

Figure 3.3. Actor's Marital Satisfaction as a Function of the Interaction
Between the Partners' Scores on Avoidant Attachment

The interaction effect for anxious attachment indicated that dyads in which both partners were low in anxiety reported the highest satisfaction, whereas dyads in which both partners were high in anxiety reported the lowest satisfaction (see Figure 4).
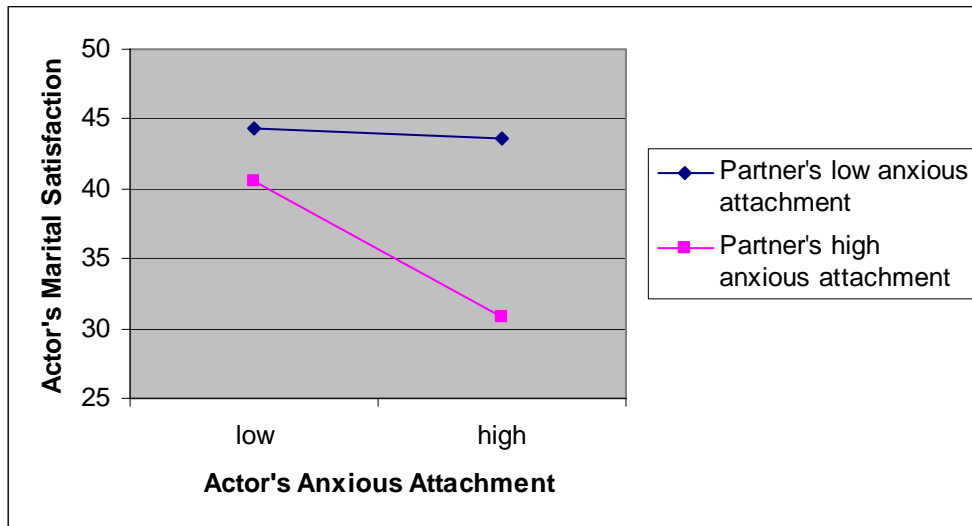
Figure 3.4. Actor's Marital Satisfaction as a Function of the Interaction Between the Partners' Scores on Anxious Attachment

Further, the interaction effect for social absorption revealed that dyads in which one or both members were high on social absorption report relatively higher satisfaction than dyads in which neither partner was high on social absorption (see Figure 5). Finally, the interaction between the actor's gender and the actor's score on sensation seeking indicated that for men, being low on sensation seeking was associated with high satisfaction, whereas for women, being high on sensation seeking was associated with high satisfaction (see Figure 1). These findings are consistent with the interaction effects for sensation seeking that were reported earlier.

The test for whether these additional terms in the model improved the model fit consists of calculating the difference between the two -2 log likelihood values (4257.7 – 4203.7 = 54) and comparing that value to a chi square distribution with 39 df. The *p*

value associated with this test of model improvement was .05, indicating that the more

complex model did indeed provide a better overall fit to the data.
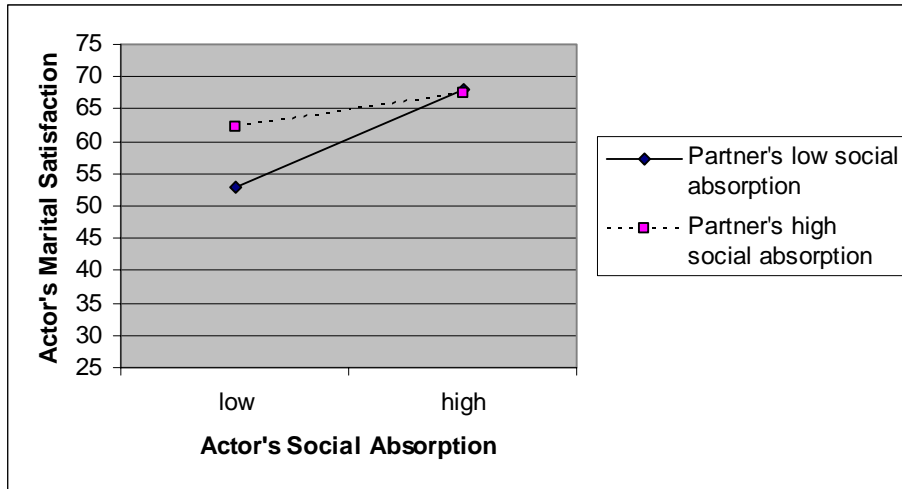

Figure 3.5 Actor's Marital Satisfaction as a Function of the Interaction
Between the Partners' Scores on Social Absorption

Table 3.8. *Predicting Marital Satisfaction Using Actor and Partner Main Effects and Actor and Partner Interaction Effects*

Predictor	ACTOR				PARTNER				INTERACTION			
	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*	Beta	df	*F* statistic	adjusted *d*
Model 1: Actor and Partner Main Effects Only												
Gender (AGEN)	-.26	400	3.83*	.20								
Openness to Experience	-.13	687	5.34*	.20								
Conscientiousness	.13	611	6.80**	.21								
Agreeableness	.28	640	19.28***	.34								
Social Absorption	.30	723	77.65***	.82	.08	719	6.09**	.22				
Anxious Attachment	-.40	704	88.39***	.88	-.23	705	29.43***	.50				
Sociosexuality	-.16	760	25.33***	.45								
-2 Log Likelihood	**4257.7**											
Model 2: Actor and Partner Main Effects, Gender and Gender Interactions, and Actor*Partner Interactions												
Anxious Attachment									-.03	405	7.29**	.31
Avoidant Attachment	-.57	415	6.38**	.25	-.55	414	6.14**	.24	.05	400	5.26*	.23
Social Absorption	.69	417	19.42***	.50	.48	419	9.30**	.34	-.01	404	5.80**	.28
Sociosexuality	-.30	433	8.43**	.32								
Actor Sensation Seeking*AGEN									-.06	537	7.57**	.23
-2 Log Likelihood	**4203.7**											

Note: Only significant main effects and interaction terms are displayed.
*** p < .0001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

Exploratory Tests for Effects Involving the Length of the Relationship

Two final research questions concerned how the length of the partners' relationship might influence (1) the relationship between the partners' personality traits and their marital satisfaction, and (2) the similarity or dissimilarity of the partners' personalities.

The first of these research questions was whether traits might correlate differently with marital satisfaction depending on the number of years a couple has been married. To answer this question, I tested the main effect as well the interaction effects involving length of marriage in an APIM model in which I again examined the predictive power of the actor and partner effects of each of the 13 personality domains. The results indicated that length of marriage did not moderate the relationship between any of the personality traits and the actor's self-reported marital satisfaction.

The second of these final research questions concerned the potential effects of the length of the partners' marriage on the similarity or dissimilarity of their personalities. The data relevant to this question were analyzed using a series of 13 regression analyses in which the dependent variable in each of the models was the absolute difference score between the partners for the particular trait measure being studied. The smaller was the absolute difference between partners, the greater was the degree of partner similarity. The participant's length of marriage was treated as the only predictor in this regression model.

The results of these analyses revealed significant effects of length of marriage on partner similarity for several of the personality variables. In particular, I found that

husbands and wives who were married for an average of 20 to 24 years were significantly *dis*similar on traits such as psychological masculinity, social absorption, and sociosexuality. With regard to psychological masculinity, the data suggested that dyad members within this specific category of years married reported significantly higher mean absolute difference scores than the dyad members across all the years married reported overall ($F(1, 799) = 2.38$, $p <. 05$; dyads married 20 to 24 years: $M=4.24$, $SD=2.80$; overall: $M=3.75$, $SD=2.89$). Similar effects were observed for social absorption ($F(1, 799) = 2.56$, $p <. 01$; dyads married 20 to 24 years: $M=5.46$, $SD=4.11$; overall: $M=4.18$, $SD=3.74$) and for sociosexuality ($F(1, 799) = 2.35$, $p =. 05$; dyads married 20 to 24 years: $M=4.05$, $SD=4.40$; overall: $M=3.14$, $SD=3.68$).

Interestingly, the effect observed for psychological masculinity for partners married an average of 20-24 years were also present among couples married an average of 10 to 14 years ($F(1, 799) = 2.26$, $p <. 05$; dyads married 10 to 14 years: $M=3.99$, $SD=2.72$; overall: $M=3.75$, $SD=2.89$). Lastly, I found an effect for length of marriage on partner similarity for sensation seeking, such that couples married an average of 25 to 29 years reported greater similarity than the remaining couples did overall, ($F(1, 799) = -2.65$, $p < .01$; dyads married 25 to 29 years: $M=6.11$, $SD=5.25$; overall: $M=9.47$, $SD=7.57$).

It is possible that these findings reflect the mutual influence of husbands and wives on each others' personalities over time. It is also possible, however, that these findings reflect *cohort effects* ─ historical/cultural influences that made the personalities of male and female marriage partners more or less similar at different points in

American history. The present data do not enable me to argue for one interpretation at the expense of the other. Instead, I merely note that the differences between spouses in their psychological masculinity, social absorption, and sociosexuality tended to become more salient over time (or cohort), whereas the differences between the spouses in their sensation seeking tended to decrease over time (or cohort).

Overall, however, the strongest message in these data is that married partners' personalities vary relatively little as a function of the length of their relationship, with the minimal variation that does occur being limited to a small subset of personality measures that were included in the present investigation. There are two plausible explanations for this minimal variation. First, partners may already be similar to each other from the very beginning of their relationship. Second, partners may become similar relatively early in their relationship (i.e., during the first year or two). One or both of these explanations may account for why the effects of length of marriage are either not evident or minimal in the present sample.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current research was designed to examine the associations between married partners' personalities and their marital satisfaction. In the present study, I surveyed a sample of 400 married couples to determine the influences of the partners' standing on 13 personality dimensions on their marital satisfaction. The survey assessed a diverse set of personality traits (i.e., the Big Five, attachment avoidance and anxiety, social absorption and social individuation, psychological masculinity and psychological femininity, sensation seeking, and sociosexuality) that previous research has either shown or suggested to be related to relationship satisfaction.

The major goal of the present research was to examine the unique predictive validity of the 13 personality traits in an omnibus model in which the effects of all 13 traits were tested simultaneously. To add further detail to the pattern of results, I analyzed the data using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), which enabled me to examine the effect of each personality variable (1) as a function of each participant's own trait score (an actor effect), (2) as a function of each participant's *partner's* trait score (a partner effect), and (3) as a function of the interaction between the actor and partner's trait scores for each of the 13 traits assessed.

Although the zero-order correlational data reported in Tables 2 and 3 provided

consistent support for my first two hypotheses[3], the results from the multiple-predictor

APIM data reported in Table 6 provided only partial support for my predictions with

regard to actor and partner effects of personality on marital satisfaction. This outcome

reflects the consequences of controlling for potential redundancy in the set of predictor

variables, and it presumably leads to a more accurate picture of the unique personality

influences on actors' marital satisfaction scores. This revised picture reveals significant

actor effects for the personality traits of openness to experience (-), conscientiousness

(+), agreeableness (+), social absorption (+), anxious attachment (-), and sociosexuality

(-). It also reveals significant *partner* effects for the traits of extraversion (-),

psychological femininity (+), social absorption (+), and anxious attachment (-).

With regard to hypothesis 3, the zero-order correlations revealed that for

women, greater partner similarity on social absorption, avoidant attachment, and

sociosexuality was associated with higher satisfaction. For men, greater partner

similarity on sensation seeking, psychological femininity, anxious attachment, and

sociosexuality was associated with higher satisfaction.

However, when the same effects were tested in the omnibus APIM model, I only

found a significant effect of partner similarity on social individuation as a unique

predictor of the actor's marital satisfaction. When I subsequently tested for interaction

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[3] The only variable for which I did not observe consistent support for my first two hypotheses using the correlational data was openness to experience. In fact, openness to experience was found to be unrelated to marital satisfaction across all the tests of zero-order correlations.

effects using a different type of interaction term, these post hoc analyses revealed three additional actor X partner interactions (this time, using the product terms) as significant predictors of marital satisfaction. These interactions were observed for the traits of social absorption, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance.

4.1 The Big Five Traits: How Important Are They in Predicting Relationship Satisfaction?

The results from the zero-order correlations indicate that marital satisfaction is positively associated with conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion and negatively associated with neuroticism. The results from the omnibus APIM models indicated, however, that openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness all make unique contributions to the prediction of the actor's marital satisfaction. Specifically, I observed significant *actor* effects for openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, and a significant *partner* effects for extraversion.

The actor effects for conscientiousness in the two omnibus APIM models are consistent with previous findings indicating that individuals who are disciplined and reliable report greater satisfaction with their marriage than individuals who do not possess these traits (Gattis et al, 2004). In particular, a high score on the actor's conscientiousness could contribute to marital satisfaction if conscientious actors are more successful in meeting their partners' needs, in quickly and effectively repairing relationship-relevant problems, and in taking a fair share of the blame in conflict situations. The actor effect for agreeableness in the two APIM models is also consistent with previous research findings (Donnellan et al, 2004; Gattis et al,, 2004; Watson et al,

2000), suggesting that a having a positive attitude, good intentions, and altruistic tendencies also contributes to greater marital satisfaction.

Perhaps of greatest interest to Big Five aficionados are the outcomes observed for extraversion and neuroticism. These are the two Big Five dimensions for which there is the greatest amount of available research, yet the ones for which there is also the greatest amount of mixed evidence (see Donnellan et al, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Kosek, 1996; Lester et al, 1989; Watson et al, 2000). In the present study, the correlational data suggest that women's extraversion is positively associated with both their own and their partner's satisfaction. In particular, men whose wives were extraverted reported greater satisfaction with their marriage. On the other hand, the regression data suggest that, in general, partner extraversion is a *negative* predictor of marital satisfaction—a seemingly paradoxical result.

A possible solution to reconciling these apparently contradictory findings might be that the negative association occurs when the actor is female and the partner is male, as this is a case in which the man's likelihood of engaging in marital infidelity might be greater because of his relatively greater level of extraversion. Whatever the explanation, these findings appear to be consistent with previous findings reported by Kelly and Conley (1987), which indicated that high extraversion in men, but not in women, predicted marital dissolution.

With regard to neuroticism, the present research *did not* replicate the findings from previous studies which suggested that a strong, negative association would be found between neuroticism and satisfaction. This outcome is exactly the opposite of that

implied by Karney and Bradbury's (1995) previously-noted assertion that, "…whether other personality traits account for significant variance in marital outcome after controlling for neuroticism remains to be examined." Although neuroticism was indeed negatively associated with both the actor's and the partner's marital satisfaction in the zero-order correlation data, neuroticism was *not* found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction in any of the multiple regression models that I conducted subsequently. The obvious explanation for this null finding is that neuroticism did not have unique predictive value in relation to at least one of the other predictor variables in the multiple regression models ─ in this case, the anxious attachment variable, which, in the present study, accounted for more unique variance in marital satisfaction than any other personality variable tested.

In fact, in my earlier literature review of the studies that have examined the associations between the Big Five trait dimensions and marital satisfaction, I found that most, if not all, of these studies assessed only the Big Five factors in relation to marital satisfaction, and thereby ignored the possible significance of other variables. This omission is, at least in retrospect, particularly glaring with respect to anxious attachment, a trait that correlates substantially with neuroticism and has been repeatedly associated with different aspects of relationship functioning. Not surprisingly, I will have more to say about the link between anxious attachment and marital satisfaction below.

Finally, the tests of actor and partner effects for openness to experience revealed that the actors' score on openness was a negative predictor of their own satisfaction.

This finding is consistent with previous findings suggesting that openness to experience is negatively related not only to marital stability and satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), but also to relationship length (Shaver & Brennan, 1992; White, Hendrick, and Hendrick, 2004). It is possible that this effect occurs because imaginative partners are better able to imagine themselves making a different life outside of their marriage than less imaginative partners are. Such individuals may also be more likely to challenge the status quo of the relationship and to confront its potentially negative aspects.

4.2 The Role of Relationship-Relevant Traits in Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Beyond the Big Five effects that I have just described, main effects for four relationship-relevant traits emerged in the prediction models as strong and consistent predictors of marital satisfaction. These traits were attachment anxiety, social absorption, sociosexuality, and psychological femininity. Specifically, I observed significant *actor* effects for anxious attachment, social absorption, and sociosexuality, and significant *partner* effects for attachment anxiety, social absorption, sociosexuality, and psychological femininity.

With regard to attachment anxiety, anxious individuals, as well as individuals who were married to anxious partners, reported low marital satisfaction. These findings are not at all surprising because previous research has confirmed that a robust, negative relationship exists between anxious attachment and marital satisfaction. Individuals who, despite their desire for closeness, find it difficult to trust their partners and worry about being abandoned by them may poison the atmosphere of their own marriages through their doubts and insecurities. What is worth examining, however, is the

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potential explanation this finding offers for the non-significant associations found between neuroticism and satisfaction.

Recall that, in the present study, neuroticism had substantial zero-order correlations with anxious attachment, for both husbands and wives separately, and between husbands and wives. These correlations ranged from .18 to .52, suggesting moderate associations between attachment anxiety and neuroticism. Previous studies have indicated, however, that individuals who score high on neuroticism also report higher levels of relationship anxiety, which typically emerges when a person feels inadequately loved and insufficiently in control of interpersonal events (Noftle & Shaver, 2006; Shaver & Brennan, 1992). It is possible that attachment anxiety emerged as a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction in studies that assessed both variables because attachment anxiety is more context-specific, relative to the generality of its correlate, neuroticism.

The second strong and consistent predictor of marital satisfaction in the current study was social absorption. Specifically, significant actor and partner effects emerged for social absorption, such that individuals high in social absorption, as well as individuals who were married to partners who were high in social absorption, reported greater satisfaction with their marriages. These findings are also not surprising, because people who score high in social absorption are open to the experience of being in highly interdependent relationships, of which marriage is perhaps the prototypical example.

Moreover, the other personality traits with which social absorption is positive correlated with paint a picture of people with high social absorption scores as being

positively responsive to and attached to their interaction partners. These characteristics are obviously consistent with their readiness to become a partner in a highly interdependent relationship. And, because marriage is *the* quintessentially interdependent relationship, one would expect that people who are high in social absorption would find this type of relationship particularly satisfying. Of course, for this type of relationship to work well, *both* partners would have to value the extreme interdependence that it provides. It is therefore of interest that the current data revealed that it is just as important for the individual's *partner* to desire and maintain behavioral interdependence within the relationship (i.e., there are additive actor and partner effects for the variable of social absorption).

The third strong and consistent predictor of marital satisfaction in the current study was sociosexuality. Specifically, a significant actor effect emerged for sociosexuality, such that increased sociosexuality was associated with decreased marital satisfaction. Somewhat paradoxically, however, in one model a small partner effect also emerged for sociosexuality, such that greater sociosexuality on the part of one's partner was associated with increased satisfaction for the actor.

How could we reconcile these apparently contradictory results? For both the men and the women in this study, we can conclude that those who have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation – those who typically have had multiple sexual partners in the past and are relatively comfortable engaging in sexual relations in the absence of commitment or closeness – report low satisfaction with their marriage. On the other hand, the partner effect for sociosexuality, although small, seems to suggest that having

a partner who is high on sociosexuality leads to increased satisfaction of the actor. Perhaps actors who are high in sociosexuality find the demands of monogamous commitment unduly restrictive, impairing their satisfaction, whereas actors whose partners are high in sociosexuality benefit from having more sexually experienced partners, even if they are ones whose capacity for fidelity is more questionable.

The fourth strong and consistent predictor of marital satisfaction in the current study was psychological femininity. Specifically, a significant partner effect emerged for this trait, such that individuals whose partners scored high on psychological femininity reported high satisfaction with their marriage. For both males and females, it can be concluded that those whose partners exhibit qualities of empathy, care, warmth and nurturance are relatively satisfied compared to individuals whose partners do not exhibit these characteristics.

This, too, is not a new finding. Many researchers have found that "happiness is a (psychologically) feminine marriage partner" (e.g., Antill, 1983; Ickes, 1985). In fact, Antill (1983) further concluded that people with androgynous partners are not satisfied because their partners are high in both psychological masculinity and psychological femininity, but only because they are high in psychological femininity. In addition, Antill (1983) reported that psychological masculinity is unrelated to marital satisfaction, a result that is also consistent with that of the present study.

Effects of Gender

Two important findings emerged from the current set of results with regard to gender differences. Specifically, I found a significant actor effect and a significant

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partner effect for sensation seeking. Both of these effects, however, were qualified by the actor's and partner's gender, respectively. The actor by gender effect suggests that for men, lower scores on sensation seeking were associated with greater marital satisfaction. For women, however, lower scores on sensation seeking were associated with reduced marital satisfaction. The partner by gender effect suggests that for men, having a wife who is high on sensation seeking has a negative impact on the husband's level of satisfaction with the marriage. For women, however, having a husband who is high on sensation seeking has a positive impact on the wife's level of satisfaction with the marriage.

Both of these interaction effects are consistent with the findings of previous research. As noted previously, other researchers have found that when women are higher than their spouses in sensation seeking, one or both partners report relatively greater dissatisfaction with their marriage (Ficher et al, 1981; Apt & Hurlbert, 1992). Similarly, the finding that women, more than men, value risk taking in a long-term mate has been validated by several researchers. The general consensus, which stems from both evolutionary perspectives and sex role theory, seems to be that cultures have historically assigned men but not women to roles such as hunting and warfare that allowed for the accumulation of resources (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Eagly & Wood, 1999). Thus, it would make sense that relationships in which the female is low, but the males are high, on sensation seeking, would lead to greater relationship satisfaction, because the partners' personalities in this case are more consonant with societal gender-role expectations.

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4.3 Partner Similarity and Marital Satisfaction

Do Individuals Marry Partners Who Are Similar To Themselves in Personality?

The data for the current sample suggests that individuals choose to be in a marriage with someone who is similar to them across several distinct traits. This effect for partner similarity was found for openness to experience, neuroticism, sensation seeking, psychological femininity, social absorption, social individuation, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality. In general, these findings replicate previous findings in suggesting that married couples are more likely to be matched in terms of their personality traits than to be randomly paired (Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996). The partners in this sample were also found to be highly similar with regard to their self reported marital satisfaction.

Is Personality Similarity Related to Marital Satisfaction?

A related question that I addressed using the current data was whether partner similarity is associated with relationship satisfaction. The zero-order correlations between partners' absolute difference scores and marital satisfaction suggested that wives' satisfaction is higher when they and their husbands are similar on social absorption, avoidant attachment, and sociosexuality. On the other hand, other zero-order correlations suggested that husband's satisfaction is higher when he and his wife are similar on sensation seeking, psychological femininity, anxious attachment, sociosexuality and marital satisfaction.

When these associations that I observed in the zero-order correlations were tested in the APIM model, I detected only small effect sizes which suggest that the degree of discrepancy in partners' trait scores plays a very marginal role in the prediction of their marital satisfaction (see Table 7). This general conclusion comes with two exceptions, for which the effect sizes are more substantial. These data, reported in Tables 7 and 8, indicate that partner similarity on attachment avoidance and social individuation is related to marital satisfaction, such that the greater the similarity, the greater the satisfaction.

With regard to the effect for attachment avoidance, it seems that the more satisfying relationships are the ones in which the partners have similar needs for intimacy/closeness (i.e., either both are high or both are low). Similarly, with regard to social individuation, it seems that the more satisfying relationships are ones in which both partners are similar in their need to maintain a clear cognitive distinction between self and other (i.e., either both are high or both are low).

Note that in the present sample, the average correlation between avoidant attachment and social individuation for men and women was .30, suggesting that although these two traits are correlated, they may reflect two distinct ways in which partners seek to establish an optimal level of psychological closeness-versus-distance in regard to each other. What is interesting about these findings is that partners do not have to value closeness and intimacy in their relationship to remain satisfied. In some cases, at least, it may be of equal, or even greater, importance that the partners hold the same view with regard to psychological closeness and intimacy. Thus, couples in which

neither partner desires closeness or intimacy can be no less satisfied than couples in which both partners desire closeness and intimacy.

The present findings invite a consideration of three important questions. First, how can we account for the fact that certain previous studies have found a relationship between partners' personality similarity and their marital satisfaction whereas other studies have not? Second, how can we reconcile these inconsistencies? Third, if the overall evidence for the importance of partner similarity (and complementarity) is both limited and somewhat mixed, then do actor/partner personality interactions have any substantial influence on satisfaction in relationships, and if so, what predictive utility do they offer in comparison to the "main effect" influences of individual actor and partner characteristics?

Researchers now generally agree that there is an appreciable degree of assortative mating on personality dimensions between the partners in romantic relationships, and the results of the present study clearly support this assertion. In fact, in the series of partial, pair-wise intraclass correlations I computed, I found substantial evidence of assortative mating for 9 out of the 13 personality traits measured. The inconsistency emerges, however, when researchers attempt (often unsuccessfully) to predict satisfaction as a function of partner similarity. It is possible that although couples in marriages are more similar to each other than chance would predict, this degree of similarity (or dissimilarity) does not necessarily have a significant impact on the perceived quality of their relationship.

Whether it does or does not appears to depend upon the personality trait in question. Although a number of previous researchers have found significant associations between partner similarity on the Big Five traits and marital satisfaction (see Blum and Mehrabian, 1999; Kosek, 1996; Nemechek and Olson, 1999), I did not observe partner similarity on any of the Big Five traits to be predictive of marital satisfaction in the current study. The most plausible interpretation of this difference seems to be that the inclusion in my multiple regression models of the more relationship-relevant measures of interpersonal anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and social absorption reduced the unique effects of partner similarity on the Big Five variables to null effects.

It is also possible that the interactions between partners' trait scores are indeed useful in predicting satisfaction in marriages, but that the more important of these interactions do not take the form of partner similarity/dissimilarity. For example, Kenny, Kashy and Cook (2006) have stated that interactions between partner's trait scores may take a number of different forms, depending on the theoretical perspective that is relevant to the study in question. Taking seriously their advice that different interaction terms might yield somewhat different patterns of results, I followed up my tests of partner similarity effects by conducting strictly exploratory tests of the multiplicative interactions (product terms) between actor and partner trait scores. I found that these tests resulted in significant interaction effects for attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and social absorption.

With regard to attachment anxiety, individuals reported satisfaction with their marriage when both the actor and his/her partner were low in anxiety, whereas individuals reported relatively lower satisfaction with their marriage when both the actor and his/her partner were high in anxiety (see Figure 4). Further, individuals in relationships in which only one partner was high in attachment anxiety reported higher marital satisfaction than relationships in which both partners were high in attachment anxiety. The reverse trend was observed for social absorption. When both the actor and his/her partner were high on social absorption, the actor reported satisfaction with his/her marriage, whereas when both the actor and partner were low on social absorption, the actor reported relatively lower satisfaction with their marriage (see Figure 5). Further, individuals in relationships in which at least one partner was high on social absorption reported higher marital satisfaction than relationships in which both partners were low on social absorption.

To sum up this review of the actor-partner interaction effects, after controlling for the main effects of each dyad member's trait scores, marginal effects of personality similarity on marital satisfaction emerged (see Table 7 and Table 8). These effects were found for attachment avoidance and social individuation, and indicated that greater similarity with regard to partner's desire for emotional intimacy and independence within the relationship was associated with greater satisfaction.

Further, the product-score interactions between partners' trait scores on attachment anxiety and social absorption also significantly predicted marital satisfaction (see Table 8). These effects indicated that satisfaction is higher when both partners are

low on attachment anxiety compared to when both partners are high on attachment anxiety. With regard to social absorption, these effects indicated that satisfaction is higher when both partners are high on social absorption compared to when both partners are low on social absorption.

Taken collectively, these results lead me to conclude that actor-partner interaction effects are most likely to be found for those personality traits that have the most direct relevance to partners' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the context of close relationships. For personality traits that have less relevance in this context, actor-partner interaction effects are less likely to be found, and when they *are* found, are likely to be weaker and more inconsistent across studies.

4.4 An Integrative Summary and Directions for Future Research

The results from this study confirm that married couples' personalities influence relationship satisfaction in the form of actor effects, partner effects, and through the unique interaction of the actor and partner's personality traits. The present findings also advance our understanding of which traits are most important in this regard—and why.

The expectation that partners' personality traits should affect their marital satisfaction is consistent with Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which assumes that personality traits affect partners' relationship-relevant motives such as their willingness to accommodate their partner and even to forgo their own immediate self-interest in the interest of supporting the partner and sustaining the relationship. From the perspective of Interdependence Theory, one would expect personality influences on marital

satisfaction to take all of the forms that have emerged in the present study: actor effects, partner effects, and actor-partner interaction effects. One would also expect that the personality traits that would account for the most variance in marital satisfaction would be those having the greatest relevance to the partners' behavior in the context of personal relationships.

Clearly, the results of the present study are consistent with both of these expectations. They showed that actors' marital satisfaction scores were predicted not only by certain of their own traits, but by certain of their partners' traits as well. And just as Interdependence Theory would predict, the traits that mattered most in this regard were the ones having the greatest direct relevance to the partner's behavior in the context of personal relationships.

Consider, for example, the trait of neuroticism, which Karney and Bradbury (1995) have described as the strongest and most consistent predictor of marital satisfaction of all of the Big Five trait dimensions. Although the zero-order correlations from the present study suggest that this trait is significantly associated with marital satisfaction, its predictive effect was nullified and supplanted by the stronger effect of anxious attachment in the multiple regression analyses. And this was not an isolated case. Ordered in terms of the amount of unique variance each accounted for in the second APIM model (which was a combined test of main effects plus interaction effects), I found significant *actor* effects for the personality traits of anxious attachment (adjusted d =.89), social absorption (.83), sociosexuality (.33), agreeableness (.31), openness to experience (.21), and conscientiousness (.21) and significant *partner*

effects for the traits of anxious attachment (.50), social absorption (.24), sociosexuality (.21), extraversion (.18), and psychological femininity (.17).

Thus, the traits that have the strongest unique influences as additive actor and partner effects on marital satisfaction tend to be those that translate most directly into behaviors that have direct relevance to the long-term "health" of a marital relationship. More specifically, the individuals who seem to be most satisfied in a marriage relationship are those who are reliable, supportive, and understanding in their relationships with others, and who prefer to engage in sexual relations only with committed partners. They are, in other words, individuals whose "personality profiles" are a good match for our society's normative expectations about what constitutes an ideal candidate for a traditional marriage in our culture.

Similarly, with regard to partner effects, the present data indicate that individuals are most satisfied when they are married to *partners* whose "personality profiles" are a good match to society's view of an ideal marriage partner. More specifically, the individuals who reported the greatest satisfaction were those whose marriage *partners* were sensitive and caring, and who expressed an affective concern for their welfare. Individuals also seem to be most satisfied when their *partner* is perceived to be someone who will engage only in committed sexual relations. In fact, a marriage partner who exhibits excessive friendliness towards others leads the actor to experience heightened dissatisfaction with the marriage, possibly because the partner's excessive friendliness is perceived as threatening to the stability of the relationship.

Finally, with regard to the significant actor x partner interactions that emerged in the current data, the data showed that partners must match each other on certain relationship-relevant dimensions for relationship satisfaction to be high. Some individuals want to maintain a high level of behavioral interdependence with their partner, whereas other individuals don't. By the same token, some individuals need to sustain a strong distinction between self and others in the relationship ("this is me and what's mine, and this is you and what's yours"), whereas other individuals don't. The actor X partner interaction data revealed evidence for these kinds of effects, showing specifically that the relationship-relevant variables of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, social absorption, and social individuation all emerged as powerful predictors of relationship satisfaction, in contrast to the more traditionally examined Big Five dimensions.

The interaction effects for these four variables suggest that it is critical to satisfaction in marriage relationships for both partners to feel confident that their husband or wife is someone that they can rely on to respond to their needs in times of stress. The current data also revealed that satisfying marriages are those in which both partners enjoy a high degree of behavioral interdependence within the relationship as well as those in which the partners enjoy a high degree of cognitive interdependence and emotional intimacy. The important qualification to these latter findings (evident in the significant interaction effect for social individuation) is that some marriages can still be satisfying if an individual prefers a low level of cognitive interdependence (and/or low level of emotional intimacy), but only if his/her partner is similarly inclined.

Although the current data suggest that actor-partner interactions are indeed important to our understanding of how personality influences relationship satisfaction, they also caution us that the influence of partners' personality traits on each other's satisfaction is not always bi-directional. The general consensus, which stems from both evolutionary perspectives and sex role theory, seems to be that men and women have confronted different adaptive challenges over the human evolutionary history and, as a result, are expected to differ psychologically and to occupy the different social roles that have co-evolved historically in response to these psychological differences (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

In the current study, an important gender difference was evident which might have emerged as a result of men's and women's different adaptive challenges, and which suggests that the personalities of husbands and wives can lead to very different experiences of satisfaction in a marriage relationship.

In particular, because men and women possess "sex-specific evolved mechanisms" (Eagly & Wood, pg. 408), some personality characteristics are viewed positively in men, but negatively if expressed by women. For instance, the current data suggest that for men, having a wife who is high on sensation seeking has a negative impact on the husband's level of satisfaction with the marriage. However, for women, having a husband who is high on sensation seeking has a positive impact on the wife's level of satisfaction with the marriage.

This finding with regard to the personality trait of sensation seeking is consistent with the evolutionary perspective on evolved gender differences. Specifically, a

relatively high degree of risk taking in men, compared to women, may have enabled men to successfully engage in activities such as hunting and warfare, which in turn enabled them to accumulate resources for their family (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Eagly & Wood, 1999). For women, this quality in a male partner should be particularly attractive because it would suggest that the man is able to provide resources for the family. On the other hand, a high degree of risk taking in women may not be viewed by their male partners as desirable, but rather as threatening to the stability of the relationship because it is seen as inconsistent with the evolved proclivity of women to nurture and to remain loyal to long-term mates in order to ensure the survival of their offspring.

Additional studies are needed to refine our understanding of the specific ways in which the traits that were identified as uniquely predictive in the present study influence relationship satisfaction, both collectively and uniquely for men and women. For example, it would be interesting to examine the personality correlates of the specific behaviors displayed by relationship partners who report high versus low levels of satisfaction with their marriage. How do the partners in these two types of couple behave towards each other in times of stress? How much time do they really spend together and what type of activities do they engage in together? It would also be informative to examine how the personality traits of satisfied (versus unsatisfied) couples are related to the types of behaviors they display during conflict resolution episodes (see, for example, Verhofstadt, Buysse, Ickes, DeClerq, & Peene, 2005).

Furthermore, given the increase in dual-income households as well as the increase in households in which many women work outside of the home while their

husbands raise the children, researchers should begin to examine the relationship dynamics of families that do not conform to society's normative expectations of a traditional household. It is possible, for example, that the spouses' personality traits are different in such nontraditional relationships (or in response to being in them).

A third direction for future research is to examine the role of these personality traits on satisfaction across different cultures. It is possible that the influence of personality traits on satisfaction will be *less* salient in collectivistic cultures, where extended-families play a larger role in relationship maintenance, compared to the relationship dynamics of couples in individualistic cultures, in which a large number of households consist solely of the immediate family. It seems that in individualist cultures, couples are more likely (and perhaps, able) to marry for love, and thus a strong emphasis is placed on the personalities of the two individuals. In many collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, the emphasis is placed on reputation and the accumulation of resources, with a more limited emphasis placed on the personality traits of the two individuals involved.

Finally, although the current study has yielded impressive evidence of the predictive power of personality traits on marital satisfaction, it is important to acknowledge that causality may flow in the opposite direction, at least for some of the effects. That is, it is possible that satisfaction with one's marriage may lead to the emergence of certain personality traits. The general failure of the categorical length-of-marriage measure to moderate such effects tends to argue against this possibility, or at least to suggest that any personality change that results from the marriage must occur

quite early in the relationship. Researchers should therefore explore this possibility by conducting longitudinal studies *of engaged and newlywed couples* that will enable them to examine the predictive utility of relationship satisfaction over time on changes in the individual spouses' personalities.

Advantages and Limitations of the Current Study

This study improved upon previous ones in several ways. First, it employed a large Internet-based sample of 400 couples (both husbands and wives) residing in a wide variety of geographic locations. Too often, researchers have relied on one partner's perceptions of their spouse's thoughts and behaviors, a limitation of their data sets that can lead to incorrect or over-generalized conclusions. Second, the sample was sufficiently large and representative that the results of this study can be generalized with some confidence to the larger population of married couples in the United States from which the survey sample was drawn. Third, the present study included measures of 13 different personality constructs, in contrast to most of the previous studies which have rarely included more than five. Fourth, the data were analyzed by means of the Actor Partner Interdependence Model, which enabled me to separate the influences of personality on marital satisfaction that were attributable to the actor, the partner, and the actor-partner interaction effects.

Although the Internet can be one of the most efficient ways to collect data, issues pertaining to the representativeness of the sample, which is often a result of the self-selection bias, often arise and therefore must be addressed. The fact that the couples sampled had previously agreed to be contacted by a research firm raises the possibility

of potential self-selection bias. For example, it is possible that dissatisfied couples may be less likely to volunteer to participate in this kind of research. Given the large sample size and the survey firm's efforts to achieve representativeness, we do not believe that this is a serious problem, although it is one that cannot be completely ruled out.

Conclusions

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from the current data. They can be summarized as follows:

First, the results from the current study indicate that *both* partners' personalities play an important role in predicting marital satisfaction, thus leading to the importance of examining actor, partner, and interaction effects of personality on marital satisfaction.

Second, contrary to the long held belief among researchers that partner similarity with regard to personality is important to marital satisfaction, the data from the current study suggests that the unique interaction between partners' personalities (one that can only be explored through the product-term of the actor's and partner's personality scores) is an important source of variance in couples' satisfaction.

Third, the results from the current study overwhelmingly support the importance of examining relationship-specific variables because of the greater relevance and specificity (compared to the Big Five) that they offer in understanding individual cognitions and behaviors within the context of a marriage relationship.

Fourth, the influence of partner's personalities on each other's satisfaction is not always bi-directional; rather, some personality characteristics may be viewed positively in men, but negatively if expressed by women.

Fifth, I found strong evidence of assertive mating on the personality dimensions of openness to experience, neuroticism, sensation seeking, psychological femininity, social absorption, social individuation, anxious attachment, and sociosexuality. I also found complementary evidence that married partners' personalities vary relatively little as a function of the length of their relationship, with the minimal variation that does occur being limited to only 3 of the 13 personality traits assessed in the current study.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?
   o male
   o female

2. What is your age group?
   o 15-24
   o 25-34
   o 35-44
   o 45-54
   o 55-64
   o 65-74
   o 75 and older

3. What is your ethnicity?
   o Asian / Asian-American
   o Black / African-American
   o Hispanic / Latino
   o Middle Eastern
   o Pacific Islander
   o White / Anglo-American
   o Other

4. How many years have you known your current spouse?
   o 4 or less
   o 5 to 9
   o 10 to 14
   o 15 to 19
   o 20 to 24
   o 25 to 29
   o 30 to 34
   o 35 or more

5. How many years have you and your partner been married?
   o 4 or less
   o 5 to 9
   o 10 to 14
   o 15 to 19
   o 20 to 24
   o 25 to 29
   o 30 to 34
   o 35 or more

6. In which of the following ranges is your annual household income?
   o Below $20,000

- $20,001 to $40,000
- $40,001 to $60,000
- $60,001 to $80,000
- $80,001 to $100,000
- $100,001 to $120,000
- above $120,000

APPENDIX B

BIG FIVE PERSONALITY SCALE

Instructions. For each of the following items, please indicate how characteristic or uncharacteristic the statement is as a description of your own personality and temperament. In each case, choose the one response alternative that describes you the best. The available response alternatives are:

- o Very characteristic of me

- o Somewhat characteristic of me

- o Somewhat uncharacteristic of me

- o Very uncharacteristic of me

1. I am not easily bothered by things. (N)

2. I have a good word for everyone. (A)

3. I am not interested in abstract ideas. (O)

4. I make plans and stick to them. (C)

5. I have a vivid imagination. (O)

6. I am often down in the dumps. (N)

7. I don't like to draw attention to myself. (E)

8. I believe that others have good intentions. (A)

9. I pay attention to details. (C)

10. I avoid philosophical discussions. (O)

11. I suspect hidden motives in others. (A)

12. I don't talk a lot. (E)

13. I respect people and accept them as they are. (A)

14. I often feel blue. (N)

15. I feel comfortable around people. (E)

16. I enjoy hearing new ideas. (O)

17. I have frequent mood swings. (N)

18. I make friends easily. (E)

19. I often leave things unfinished. (C)

20. I have a sharp tongue. (A)

21. I'm the life of the party. (E)

22. I believe in the importance of art. (O)

23. I find it difficult to get down to work. (C)

24. I get my chores done right away. (C)

25. I get stressed out easily. (N)

APPENDIX C

SOCIAL ORIENTATION SCALE

Instructions. For each of the following items, please indicate how characteristic or uncharacteristic the statement is as a description of your own personality and temperament. In each case, choose the one response alternative that describes you the best. The available response alternatives are:

- o   Very characteristic of me
- o   Somewhat characteristic of me
- o   Somewhat uncharacteristic of me
- o   Very uncharacteristic of me

1. I tend to get completely absorbed in my interactions with my romantic partner. (SA)

2. I like to maintain a clear distinction between myself and my romantic partner when I interact with her/him. (SI)

3. I can get so absorbed in a conversation or a shared activity with my romantic partner that I forget everything else. (SA)

4. In interactions with my romantic partners, I have a clear and definite sense of the difference between my perspective and theirs. (SI)

5. As a person, I have clear cut boundaries and I expect my romantic partner to respect them. (SI)

6. It's easy for me to get so caught up in a conversation with my romantic partner that I lose all track of time. (SA)

7. It's important to me to have a distinct sense of my own identity and to know how it differs from that of my romantic partner. (SI)

8. I tend to stay absorbed in my own thoughts and feelings, even when I am with my romantic partner. (SI)

9. I like the experience of merging with my romantic partner and becoming part of something larger than myself. (SA)

10. In my close relationships, I experience such a strong sense of connection and sharing that I think in terms of "we" rather than in terms of "me" and "you." (SA)

11. It's easy for me to keep track of what I contribute and what my romantic partner contributes to a discussion. (SI)

12. It's easy for me to get "in sync" with my romantic partner and to "merge" with her/him during the time we're together. (SA)

13. In conversations with my romantic partner, I am very aware of the thoughts and feelings that I should keep to myself. (SI)

14. I feel comfortable opening up to my romantic partner and sharing experiences with her/him. (SA)

15. I have such a strong sense of rapport with my romantic partner that I can assume without question that we understand each other. (SA)

16. When I interact with my romantic partner, I am aware of the "invisible barrier" that separates us. (SI)

17. I like to have a clear sense of how my romantic partner is different from me. (SI)

18. In conversations, the things I say are so interconnected with the things my

partner says that I don't even try to separate them. (SA)

APPENDIX D

SHORT SCALES DEVELOPED FOR THE DATING WEBSITE

Instructions. . For each of the following items, please indicate how characteristic or uncharacteristic the statement is as a description of your own personality and temperament. In each case, choose the one response alternative that describes you the best. The available response alternatives are:

- o Very characteristic of me
- o Somewhat characteristic of me
- o Somewhat uncharacteristic of me
- o Very uncharacteristic of me

Anxious Attachment

1. I often worry that my romantic partners don't feel as strongly committed to me as I do to them.

2. I tend to brood a lot about the day-to-day problems that occur in my romantic relationships.

3. My romantic relationships are characterized by intense emotional ups and downs, ranging from the most exhilarating highs to the bleakest and most desperate lows.

4. My romantic relationships are generally serene and untroubled, with few if any emotional lows.

5. I am preoccupied with what my romantic partner might be thinking and feeling during the times when our relationship is not going well.

6. I don't worry about or give much thought to the occasional problems that come up in my romantic relationships.

7. I seldom worry about being rejected or abandoned by my romantic partner.

8. I am often left feeling very hurt and distressed when my romantic partner criticizes me.

9. The possibility of being betrayed or abandoned by a romantic partner is something that bothers me a lot.

10. I rarely worry that my relationship with a romantic partner might fail.

Avoidant Attachment

1. I want to share everything with my romantic partner, and the closer we are, the happier I am.

2. I don't like to depend too much on my romantic partners or have them depend too much on me.

3. I need more privacy and personal "space" in my romantic relationships than most partners are willing to give to me.

4. I like to call my romantic partner frequently from work, so that I can stay in close touch throughout the day.

5. I can't stand to be in a relationship with a needy partner who makes constant demands of me.

6. In general, having too much intimacy in a romantic relationship bothers me more than having too little.

7. I think the best relationships are ones in which the partners respect each other's privacy and are careful not to intrude.

8. I like to have long talks with my romantic partners, in which I hare all of my deepest and most personal thoughts and feelings with them.

9. In my experience, problems in romantic relationships are more likely to occur when the partners say too much to each other than when they say too little.

10. I don't need or want as much intimacy from my romantic partners as they seem to want from me.

Sociosexuality

1. I can express my sexual feelings with people I'm attracted to without having to be in a committed relationship.

2. I would not consider having sex with someone outside of a committed relationship.

3. It's important to me to be able to express my sexuality with different partners.

4. I have had different sexual partners in the past and expect to have more in the future.

5. I won't settle for anything less than a loving, committed partner to whom I am sexually faithful and who is sexually faithful to me.

6. I feel that I gain important insights by exploring my sexuality with different partners.

7. I am open to having casual sex with someone if the mutual attraction is strong.

8. I am opposed to sex outside of a loving and committed relationship.

9. I enjoy having sex with different partners as a way of getting to know them better.

10. Once I have committed myself to someone, I would never betray our relationship by having sex with someone else too.

<u>Psychological Masculinity</u>

1. I am often the person who steps up and takes charge of things.

2. I can be strong and decisive when other people aren't.

3. I am assertive and forceful in the way I present myself.

4. I rarely attempt to get other people to do things my way.

5. I am the kind of person who likes to make things happen.

6. I'm good at providing directions for others and telling them what to do.

7. I am quick to stand up for myself whenever I am challenged or criticized.

8. I tend to be more of a follower than a leader.

9. I respond to things as they happen without trying too hard to control them.

10. I am more likely to intimidate others than to be intimidated by them.

<u>Psychological Femininity</u>

1. People feel that they can confide in me – that I am a good listener.

2. I value my relationships with others and I am careful not to damage them.

3. I am the kind of person who is "always there for you."

4. I am kind and supportive in the way I relate to others.

5. I am very considerate of other people's feelings.

6. I don't concern myself too much with what other people might want or need.

7. I am very responsive to other people's needs.

8. I am sympathetic to the problems that other people have.

9. I deal with my own problems and let other people deal with theirs.

10. I care about others and I find ways to let them know it.

Sensation Seeking

1. I like to travel to places where I have never been and where I really don't know what to expect.

2. I like to meet and interact with people who have unusual interests and lifestyles.

3. I can't stand to sit at home every evening; I have to get out and go somewhere.

4. I prefer to live my life in an environment that is familiar and predictable.

5. I want to sample life's experiences as widely as possible before I die.

6. I like to go on road trips with no planned destinations or agenda, just to experience whatever happens next.

7. I am attracted to the kinds of unusual experiences that most people will never have.

8. I don't like foods that are foreign or unfamiliar to me; I prefer to eat what I already know I will like.

9. My life is generally quite and uneventful, and I like it that way.

10. I am not interested in talking to people who have unconventional ideas.

11. I like to drive fast, enjoying the sense of speed and danger that results.

12. I would enjoy the experience of bungee jumping from the top of a tall bridge.

13. I usually avoid the kinds of intense activities that might put me in physical danger.

14. I like to participate in rough-and-tumble sports in which anything can happen.

15. I am not a risk-taker when my physical health and safety are involved.

16. I would enjoy the experience of using an anchored rope to rappel down the side of a sheer cliff.

17. I would like to drive a jeep straight up the step slope of a mountainside.

18. I don't think motorcycles are safe enough to use for day-to-day transportation.

19. I think it would be fun to walk a tightrope that is strung over a busy street between two buildings.

20. I like to participate in radical sports that involve elements of danger, excitement, and physical challenge.

APPENDIX E

SELECTED ITEMS FROM THE DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Instructions. For each of the following items, indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner by choosing the appropriate response alternative. The available response alternatives are:

- o Always agree
- o Usually agree
- o Sometimes disagree
- o Often disagree
- o Always disagree

1. Religious matters
2. Demonstration of affection
3. Making major decisions
4. Sex relations
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)
6. Career decisions

Now answer the remaining items by selecting one of the following response alternatives:

- o All the time
- o Often
- o Occasionally
- o Rarely

o   Never

1. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?

2. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

3. Do you ever regret that you married?

4. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?

5. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

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