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**16PF Couples Counseling Report: Predictors of Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and Relationship Adjustment of Females in Marital Therapy**

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16PF Couples Counseling Report:  
Predictors of Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and  
Relationship Adjustment of Females in Marital Therapy

by

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in  
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We the undersigned committee  
hereby approve the attached doctoral research project

16PF Couples Counseling Report:  
Predictors of Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and  
Relationship Adjustment of Females in Marital Therapy

by

Megan Christine Hart

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## Abstract

TITLE: 16PF Couples Counseling Report: Predictors of Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and Relationship Adjustment of Females in Marital Therapy

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The preponderance of research in marital therapy focuses on dissatisfaction, discord, and divorce among couples, often leading to an unbalanced perspective of the complex and dynamic nature of relationships. Utilizing an approach to examine the strengths, or specific areas of satisfaction, the present study utilizes the 16 Personality Factor Couple's Counseling Report (16PF CCR) variables of overall Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and Relationship Adjustment to address factors related to adaptive relationships for females in marital therapy. Results demonstrated a positive significant relationship between overall Marital Satisfaction and eight of the nine individual satisfaction areas. There was also a positive significant relationship between Relationship Adjustment and six Primary Personality Factors, with Emotional Stability having the strongest correlation. Relationship Adjustment was also found to have a significant negative relationship with five Primary Personality Factors. Additionally, Relationship Adjustment and Personality Similarity were significantly and positively correlated. Finally, it was found that participant's length of relationship was significantly related to overall Marital Satisfaction. The limitations, implications, and arguments for further research of the current study are discussed.

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## **Introduction**

Marriage has existed as an element of life in nearly every global culture in recorded history. It has been established that the majority of Americans highly value a successful marriage. Carroll and Doherty (2003) found that 93% of Americans listed “having a happy marriage” as one of their most meaningful purposes in life. However, research has consistently demonstrated that the rates of marital satisfaction are decreasing at a disturbing rate. While the motivations behind wanting to engage in a happy and satisfying marriage are undoubtedly diverse, researchers have found that the majority of literature related to couples and marriage focuses on dissatisfaction, discord, and divorce. The empirical research emphasis has historically been placed on the unfavorable factors affecting one’s relationship, rather than the positive variables that influence marital happiness and satisfaction. With a focus on factors related to marital happiness and individual components that maintain satisfied relationships, individuals can become aware of how to enrich and support a stable marriage and reduce risk and rates of dissatisfaction and dissolution.

The present study uses the 16 Personality Factor Couple’s Counseling Report completed by couples in outpatient marital therapy to identify personality factors, individual areas of satisfaction, and demographic variables that influence marital therapy and marital satisfaction. To differentiate the research findings for non-clinical and clinical couples (those seeking marital therapy), the following review of related literature has been divided respectively.

## Literature Review

### Marital Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

**History.** Divorce has been and remains a prevalent occurrence in the United States and, although divorce rates are not increasing at the same rate they once were, it still remains an extremely common phenomenon. Over the course of the previous 150 years, the divorce rate has risen precipitously culminating with the highest point in 1979. According to Popenoe & Whitehead (2010), 40% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages result in divorce. Furthering the cause for concern is the research predicting that only 25% of couples will remain happily married after only ten years of marriage (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010). Insel & Scolnick (2006) suggest that preventing marital conflict facilitates more positive health and financial outcomes when compared to post-conflict treatment. This indicates that in order to help couples create more satisfaction in their relationship, the focus must be enhancing factors that contribute to marital satisfaction, instead of addressing the negative aspects of the relationship that have lead to dissatisfaction and dissolution.

As recently as 1980, little in the way of research findings about the processes involved in relationship satisfaction and dissolution existed. Before John Gottman's work, discussion on marital adjustment or satisfaction remained largely based on belief, anecdotes, personal observation, or speculation (Lebow, 1999). Although early studies generally focused on couples in discord, Gottman thought it was important to study couples whose marriages thrived. This approach has dramatically changed the

field of couple's therapy and how relational conflict is managed, as it assists couples in learning, developing, and practicing improving characteristics that are common in successful relationships. This approach is also consistent with B.F. Skinner's behavioral learning model (Reynolds, 1975). Skinner's theory is based on the fundamental idea that behaviors which are reinforced will tend to continue, while behaviors which are punished or avoided will eventually be extinguished.

Additionally, marital researchers have been actively searching for variables that contribute to marital adjustment (Luo et al. 2008). One such variable, personality, has received a considerable amount of attention over the years, beginning with Terman et al. (1938), who examined psychological factors that predict marital happiness. Since then, research on the intrapersonal variable of personality has waxed and waned, partly due to the recent emphasis on how spousal interactions, or interpersonal variables, impact marital outcomes (Gottman 1994; Karney and Bradbury 1997).

The current lack of knowledge concerning which patterns of marital interaction lead to marital dissolution stems in part from the fact that, in most studies, divorce and separation have been viewed as independent rather than dependent variables. For the most part, studies have been primarily concerned with the effects of marital dissolution on other variables and on the adjustment of spouses and children to marital dissolution (Gottman, 1993).

In discussing factors influencing marital satisfaction, one must first understand the influence marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction is likely to have on the relationship, and thus the individuals within that relationship. Gottman, one of the most well-known

researchers in the realm of marriage and divorce, indicated that separation is a reliable predictor of divorce and not reconciliation. In evidence of this, he identified that roughly 75% of couples that separate will divorce (1993). As of the most recent U.S. Census Bureau report on divorce and remarriage, an estimated 56% of men and 59% of women have been divorced at least one time. Of those who reported being divorced, 12.5% of men and 13.6% of women remarried (Brown & Porter, 2013). Glick (1984) found that those who remarry, have a 10 percent higher rate of divorce than those who are in their first marriage and the divorce rate becomes exponentially higher with each subsequent marriage. According the U.S. Census Bureau, between the years of 2008 to 2012, 18.7% of women had been married twice and 4.5% of women had been married three times or more.

Duncan (1994) found that separation and divorce have strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of both spouses and their children. Among the repercussions are an increased risk for mental illness and increased susceptibility to violence and accidents resulting in physical injuries. Additionally, it was also found that marital dissolution increases susceptibility to physical illness (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). Moreover, many children of divorce experience economic changes that significantly alter their day-to-day lives and increase their levels of stress in their lives, which may impact their overall development and well-being (Duncan, 1994).

Due to the broad detrimental effects of marital dissatisfaction and dissolution, many researchers have ventured into the realm of couples' research and have

developed theoretical ideas that attempt to understand why some people have happy, fulfilling marriages while others do not. The majority of what has been empirically learned about marriage and divorce over the last 30 years is derived from John Gottman's work. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) noted that most of the early research established the various negative social, personal, and mental consequences of marital dissolutions, however they were unable to establish any sort of baseline patterns that were predictive of divorce. This is critical as Gottman (1993) believed that without identifying predictors, formulating preventative or crises management strategies to improve marital functioning and outcomes would be difficult. The work of Gottman and Krokoff's study in 1989 laid the groundwork for dissolution prediction by identifying interactional patterns that were suggestive of long term marital deterioration. Specifically, they identified three interactional patterns: defensiveness, stubbornness, and withdrawal from interaction as predictive of concurrent distress and of deterioration of marital satisfaction over time.

In further studies, Gottman and colleagues (1992, 1993) identified predictive factors that significantly changed the approach to marital therapy. Their research showed that couples tend to follow a specific trajectory to marital dissolution that starts with happiness in the marriage for a period of time, then serious consideration of separation, and then actual separation and divorce. Not only did Gottman's work establish the existence of this continuum, but more importantly, he found that a balance of positive and negative elements in areas of interactive behavior, perception, and physiology that directly contribute to overall marital satisfaction.

With regard to the specific negative actions that were found to be more predictive of dissolution are criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling (termed the four horseman) (Gottman, 1993). Generally speaking, unhappy couples engaged in greater reciprocity of negative affect and possessed a significantly higher proportion of negative behaviors, comparable to that seen in distressed or divorcing couples. Gottman's research also demonstrated that marital satisfaction ultimately comes from not just how partners manage their conflicts, but how one interacts when conflict exists. A core component of this theory is distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional types of negativity in one's relationship. For example, anger can play a constructive role when it's a justifiable reaction to a partner's behavior or airing one's grievances, however contempt and criticism more often lead to extended damage to the overall relationship (Gottman, 1993). Couples who frequently engage in conflict with prolonged periods of unrelieved distress, who also possess the unbalanced ratio of negativity to positivity, are the most vulnerable to dissolution and divorce.

Gottman developed a model called the "Gottman Method" which intertwines a structured therapeutic approach and empirically supported objective concepts. These elements serve as counterweights to the defensiveness and chaos often generated by couples in marital discord (Butler, 2006). The rationale behind the Gottman model, is that, if the likelihood of divorce can be predicted, preventative measures to give the couple the best chance at long-term satisfaction in marriage can be implemented.

## **Clinical Population**

**Variables influencing females in marital therapy.** The consensus on the data provided regarding gender differences in marital quality and satisfaction indicate that wives are more likely to initiate marital therapy, as much as 73.2% of the time (Broman, 2005). In addition, wives generally report more relationship problems among couples attending marital therapy, as compared to husbands. Moreover, a multitude of researchers have concluded that overall women experience less marital satisfaction than men (Jackson, Miller, Oka, & Henry, 2014; Fincham, Beach, Harold, & Osborne, 1997; Lebaron, Miller, & Yorganson, 2014). To exemplify this point, through a National Study of Families and Households, Gager & Sanchez (2003) found that 11% couples consisted of a very satisfied husband and an unsatisfied wife, whereas 9% of couples consisted of a very satisfied wife with an unsatisfied husband.

Many studies have documented a robust association between depressive symptomology and marital discord across a variety of samples and various time periods. Christian, O'Leary, and Avery (1993) found that 36% of women who had recently experienced a significant negative marital event (abuse, violation of trust, etc.) and who had no history or prior depressive episodes were clinically depressed. A strong association between poor marital quality and depression has been well-established and explained in part by the proneness of individual's with traits of introversion and anxious attachments to develop depressive symptoms under adverse circumstances (Waring, 1994). Despite these findings, the exact process by which marital discord and depression are correlated is relatively unknown. Although the



problematic interpersonal functioning of depressed individuals may contribute to marital distress, it seems apparent that in some cases marital problems are instrumental in the development and maintenance of depression. Among many researchers, Christian-Herman, O'Leary, & Avery-Leaf (2001) have identified the bidirectional nature of the relationship between depression and marital discord. They posit that not only does depression often shape life events and relationships, but reciprocally marital factors may also influence depression, especially in people with no prior history of depressive symptomology. Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary (1990) further support this notion by identifying facets of one's marital relationship that are capable of increasing or decreasing one's risk of depression when marital distress occurs. The proposed stressors include verbal and physical aggression; threats of separation and divorce; severe spousal denigration, criticism, and blame; severe disruption of scripted routines; and major idiosyncratic marital stressors. Proposed supportive factors include couple cohesion; acceptance of emotional expression; actual and perceived coping assistance; self-esteem support; spousal dependability; and intimacy. Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary (1990) posit that when marital discord occurs, supportive factors are less available to mediate the increased presence of marital stressors, thus individuals are more likely to succumb to symptoms of depression. To test this theory, Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary (1990) conducted a study to assess to correlation between negative marital events and depression in women, specifically utilizing women who had no prior history of a depressive episode. They found that over 60% of the women who reported experiencing a separation or divorce met diagnostic criteria

for major depression, as compared to 36% of women reporting affairs and 10% reporting acts of aggression. Thus, strongly suggesting highly stressful negative marital events are associated with depressive symptomology in women.

Another factor to be considered is the differences in gender roles and expectations within a marriage. The literature indicates that women are often rated more favorable than men on characteristics such as helpfulness, kindness, compassion, and ability to devote oneself to another, thus displaying more emotional support for others. Due to the fact that gender roles are often internalized, women frequently place greater emphasis on caring for others regardless of whether or not their own needs are being met. Fincham, Beach, Harold, & Osborne (1997) found women to be more relationship oriented and more likely than men to sacrifice more to “save” a relationship. This orientation also leads women to be more likely to take responsibility for and even blame themselves for marital difficulties. In considering this data along with the conclusions regarding women’s predisposition to depression within a marriage, one explanation posits that due to women’s increased sense of responsibility for the marriage and subsequent discord they are more vulnerable to the significant marital stressors, thus less likely to fend off negative effects of marital discord.

In lieu of this information, O’Leary & Beach (1990) found behavioral marital therapy, placing emphasis on increasing feelings of closeness, open sharing of thoughts and concerns, positive interchanges, and effective problem-solving strategies for resolving marital disputes to be highly effective for women, including efficacy in decreasing depressive symptoms. Additionally, it was found that the women who

engaged in this therapy modality significantly increased their self-report of marital satisfaction following treatment. These findings suggest that marital therapy may be the most effective and appropriate treatment for clinically significant marital discord with coexisting clinically significant depression.

### **Personality and Marital Satisfaction**

**Similarity vs. complementarity.** In general, there have been various theories on compatibility, that is, whether similar personalities or opposing personalities provide for more cohesive marriages. As the theory of similarity suggests, people select their mates because of attributes they have in common. Several theories have been offered to explain how similarity increases interpersonal attraction (like-prefers-like). Research has demonstrated that individuals tend to marry those of similar education, socioeconomic status, race, religion, age, culture, attitudes, and even physique and physical attractiveness (Antill, 1983). Conversely the theory of complementary is when mates are chosen based on having differing traits and values. The idea of complementary is that each member uses their differing traits and values to form a dynamic system in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. However, significant differences in traits have been found to cause difficulty and conflict in relationships and that similarity in partners' needs are associated with marital adjustment (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978). Thus, while many believe the opposites attract approach, suggestive of the complementary theory, the research more heavily supports the similarity hypothesis. Clarkwest (2007) determined that the greater the dissimilarity between spouses, the higher risk for marital dissolution.

**Non-clinical population.** The data provided on personality characteristics measured on the 16PF support the theory of similarity. The research suggests that marital conflict and dissatisfaction arising from personality differences is much more common than conflict and dissatisfaction stemming from similarity. In a study by Karol and Russell (1995), when a couple differed on Reasoning (Factor B), men reported less overall satisfaction and less ability to agree, particularly in financial areas. Seemingly, the men preferred a partner who has the same level of knowledge and intellectual ability to help solve problems. Furthermore, they found that when Reasoning (Factor B) was noted as being high for any one individual, it increases the likelihood of better adjustment to non-traditional roles in relationships. When an individual or both partners reported low levels of Emotional Stability (Factor C) they were likely to feel more reactive to life's events and express dissatisfaction with their ability to currently cope, which is likely to affect their feelings about the relationship (Karol and Russell, 1995). Research has shown that when partners differ on Sensitivity (Factor I), it effects how the couples spend time together. That difference can be a source for more fundamental dissatisfaction with the marital experience and an inability to agree about how to work out their problems. Differences on Sensitivity (Factor I) can be related to lower overall relationship adjustment for many couples (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967; Karol & Russell, 1995; Kim, Martin, & Martin, 1989). Karol & Russell (1995) as well as Buss (1991) report differences in Vigilance (Factor L) suggests more overall distress and less satisfaction in couple's relationship. Vigilance is often accompanied by mistrust of others, which can include one's partner

and thus be associated with blaming others. Individuals who report high levels of vigilance are often suspicious about being controlled and typically anticipate and attempt to control others rather than being controlled themselves. Research also shows that a difference in the Vigilance factor is likely to be reflected in the couples' communication, processing, and parenting styles. For example, a partner scoring high on the Vigilance factor may find it difficult to trust and problem solve in a mutually supportive way. Conversely, a partner low on the Vigilance factor may be more trusting of others' motives and intentions, which may be distressing for the highly vigilant partner, if they believe that their concerns are not validated (Karol & Russell, 1995; Buss, 1991). Although this is not an exhaustive list of the personality correlates regarding couples and the corresponding 16PF scales, it establishes the foundation for the premise of link between personality and marital satisfaction.

More recently, Gonzaga, Campos, and Bradbury (2007) found that the individual personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion are most related to emotional convergence and overall marital satisfaction. As a result of similarity research, the 16 Personality Factor Couples Counseling Report uses the similarity theory to compute an overall "similarity" score that is produced by comparing each member's individual personality profile, thus to be used as another tool to assess for marital satisfaction and adjustment.

### **Relationship Adjustment**

**Non-clinical population.** Relationship adjustment refers to a person's ability to accommodate and adapt to the unique circumstances of their relationship and

personality characteristics of their partner. Accordingly, partners who successfully adapt to the behaviors, needs, and feelings of their partners are seen as having higher relationship adjustment and more marital satisfaction, whereas, those who contend with change are considered to have low relationship adjustment, which is indicative of less marital satisfaction. Knabb and Vogt (2011) found that individual personality traits can affect marital adjustment, but more importantly, the personality traits of one partner can significantly impact the other partner's marital adjustment.

Research on marital adjustment has lent itself to the incorporation of specific factors identified to enhance or diminish partner's adjustments. Specific to the 16PF, Barton and Cattell (1972) identified specific personality factors that predict marital quality and satisfaction. Their research showed that individuals who were emotionally stable (C), self-assured (O), and low anxiety (ANX), reported sexually gratifying relationships. More specifically to the female population, those who endorsed nonconformity (G) and who were group-oriented (Q2) report sexual gratification in their marriages. Individuals who report being self-assured (O), relaxed (Q4), venturesome (H), and had low anxiety (ANX) tended to share roles, interests, and life philosophies with their partners. Those who reported being conscientious (G), compulsive (Q3), outgoing (A), and independent (IN) were highly devoted to their home life (Barton & Cattell, 1972). In their pioneering research, Barton and Cattell (1973) also found that endorsement of extraversion factors (EX) such as venturesome (H), enthusiasm (F), trust (L), and self-assurance (O) suggested more shared interests, roles, and life philosophies. The body of evidence shows that while the patterns and

analysis of how personality factors impact marital adjustment and satisfaction can be quite complex, they are nonetheless fundamental in the assessment of marriage quality.

In relation to female specific traits related to marital adjustment and satisfaction, wives endorsement of neuroticism was predictive of whether couples stayed married or divorced over time (Kelly & Conley, 1987). Specifically, their research showed that women higher in neuroticism divorced earlier and came from more emotionally distant and tense families. They were also found to have less traditional attitudes towards premarital sex than those women who reported more stability in their marriage. Similarly, Blum and Mehrabian (1999) found wives who reported dominant traits and a pleasant temperament reported significant marital satisfaction, whereas wives who endorsed submissive traits and an unpleasant temperament reporting being unsatisfied with their marriage. For women, positive emotional expressivity was important for marital satisfaction (Lavalekar, Kulkarni, & Japtap, 2010). Assertiveness, positive emotional expression, and low anxiety appear to be the most significant traits related to marital satisfaction for women.

Separate from the specific personality traits indicated on the 16PF, many other factors have proved to affect marital quality and relationship adjustment. LeBaron, Miller, and Yorgason (2014) found that an unequal distribution of marital power has been shown to have an impact on marital functioning, including marital quality and marital satisfaction. Research has found these factors also significantly impact marital violence, marital stability, and marital conflict Moreover, this is exacerbated by the

perception of the distribution of power within a given relationship. Women have often reported having less power in marital relationships, as historically females have been placed into subordinate roles with regard to the institution of marriage. This unequal representation manifests in a multitude of relationship variables such as decision making, double standards regarding sexual behavior, unequal control of money, and higher risk for interpersonal violence. LeBaron, Miller, and Yorgason (2014) found that women who report having more equality in the power distribution within their marital relationship, thus more of an egalitarian dynamic, report higher levels of marital happiness than those who reported relationship perceptions of inequality. An additional factor that has been found to be highly influential regarding relationship adjustment is communication. Noller and Guthrie (1989) have suggested that communication is important in marriage because relationships exist primarily in communication between partners. Those who were found to have deficits in their communication skills were also found to have poorer relationship adjustment, whereas partners who engaged in open and frequent communication experienced a more well-adjusted marriage. Furthermore, it has been found that distressed couples display less-positive communication skills than that of non-distressed couples (O'Donohue & Crouch, 1996).

### **Demographics and Marital Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction has been defined as the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his/her marriage. One significant finding in a longitudinal study by



Clements, Stanley, and Markman (2004) found that premarital variables such as conflict interaction can be predictive of marital outcomes 13 years later. Researchers found marriage at a younger age increased the risk for distress or dissolution and was related to impulsivity, immaturity, and variable personality traits that tend to be associated with younger ages. In support of that premise, Henry, Berg, Smith, and Florsheim (2007) found that older spouses, between the ages of 60 to 70, identified their spouses as more positive and reported significantly higher marital satisfaction compared to middle-aged spouses between 40 and 50 years of age. Levensen, Cartensen, & Gottman (1993) demonstrated through the comparison of middle-aged couples and older couples, that older couples appeared to have decreased potential for conflict and increased potential for pleasure including talking about children and grandchildren, recent events they both participated in together, dreams and vacations.

There also appears to be racial and ethnic factors that relate to marital satisfaction. Clarkwest (2007) identified that the more dissimilar the couple is the more heightened the risk for marital dissolution. While one might conclude that ethnic similarities would suggest more marital satisfaction, Clarkwest (2007) found that African American couples are at higher risk for marital dissolution than non-African American couples due to higher levels of dissimilarity. The difference in similarity, they assert, is that non-African American couples tend to display a convergence of attitudes and behaviors once married, whereas African American couples do not experience the same type of convergence and instead tend to diverge in their behaviors and attitudes during the marriage. Other studies reflect similar results, indicating

African Americans report lower marital quality, more extramarital affairs, increased partner violence and are less likely to feel loved by their partner in comparison to Caucasian couples (Broman, 2005; Corra, Carter, & Knox, 2009). Due to the potential of this population being at higher risk, further research is indicated to investigate if cultural factors contribute to this divergence and how the difference can be mitigated.

Education may also play an important role in marital satisfaction as it can provide stabilizing factors like industriousness, intelligence, and motivation. Some studies found that marital satisfaction is not affected by education or income; however, Blum and Mehrabian (1999) found that individuals with high levels of marital satisfaction also had a high level of education. Another study conducted on long-term marriages discovered that a college education and “good” economic status were related to marital satisfaction (Sharlin, Kaslow, & Hammerschmidt, 2000). While there is no consensus on the impact of education in marital satisfaction, there are however, other factors related to education that should be considered as facilitating marital satisfaction. For example, higher levels of education are associated with more career options, which can improve one’s ability to find a satisfying career. The research suggests that people endorse career satisfaction are also likely to endorse marital satisfaction. It has also been identified that financial factors may serve as mitigating factors in marital satisfaction. Dew (2008) found that couples experiencing debt also suffer from decreased relationship satisfaction in time they spend together, increased financial conflict, and perceived monetary inequality. Karney and Bradbury (1995) found that wives’ income was inversely associated with marital stability, as the

lower the income the higher the marital instability, which is likely to lead to lower marital satisfaction.

Another factor that is likely to mitigate marital satisfaction is time. The length of time that couples are together is related to marital satisfaction and follows a U-shaped pattern over time. Marital satisfaction tends to peak in the first five years of marriage and again in the 30<sup>th</sup> year and beyond (Jose & Alfons, 2007). Similarly, wives experience peaks in marital dissatisfaction at seven and sixteen years (Hafner & Spence, 1988). A body of evidence exists that suggests the curvilinear path of marital satisfaction over time is defined by significant life events. Specifically, marital satisfaction follows a trajectory of a high level of satisfaction initially, drops sharply after the birth of children, reaches the lowest point when children are adolescents, and then increases as children leave the home and couples retire (Levenson, Cartensen, & Gottman, 1993). The majority of studies suggests that the presence of children significantly influences the satisfaction in marriage over time. This has been hypothesized to be highly related to increased stress levels related to parenting roles, childcare, and lifestyle changes following the birth of children. Considering all these factors, it appears that childless couples would have significantly less stress than those with children, and thus decrease the risk of marital dissolution. In fact, Blum and Mehrabian's (1999) research supports the assumption that individuals reporting higher levels of marital satisfaction had relatively fewer children than those who reported lower levels of marital satisfaction. The overall consensus of these studies suggest that the presence of children, as the driving force of significant life events, impacts marital

satisfaction over time and supports the idea that marital satisfaction tend to increase with time.

### **The 16PF Report**

The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), published by the Institute of Personality and Ability Testing, Inc. (IPAT), is a psychological assessment of sixteen distinct personality traits and five global factors of personality, containing 185 multiple-choice questions. The 16PF differs from other personality measures utilized in psychological assessment, in that it is not diagnostic in nature and is not intended to diagnose a psychological disorder. Rather, the 16PF is designed to provide supplemental information that allows detailed insight into an individual's personality. Fundamentally, the 16PF can be used in settings where diagnosis and pathology are not of primary concern and utilized to identify individual personality traits to inform the treatment process.

The sixteen measurable traits include: Warm (A), Reasoning (B), Emotional Stability (C), Dominance (E), Liveliness (F), Rule-Consciousness (G), Social Boldness (H), Sensitivity (I), Vigilance (L), Abstractedness (M), Privatness (N), Apprehension (O), Openness to Change (Q1), Self-Reliance (Q2), Perfectionism (Q3), and Tension (Q4). Each of the traits that the 16PF measures are on a continuum, and each end of the continuum represents two opposing personality dimensions. Scoring and feedback to Dominance for example, can range from Deferential to Dominant and can fall to varying degrees in between those endpoints. Each trait is scored on a ten-point scale with scores of one to three categorized as the trait on the left side of the

scale and scores eight to ten being categorized as the trait on the right side of the scale. Score of four through seven are considered to be “within normal limits” and suggest that the trait is not strongly fixed for the individual. The 16PF has five global personality factors which are based on statistical analysis of the 16 traits, which are reflected in the report on the same continuum as the 16 factors. The five global traits include Extraversion, Anxiety, Tough-Mindedness, Independence, and Self-Control. The 16PF also includes three Response Style indices that provide an evaluation of the overall validity and reliability of an individual’s responses. The three indices are Impression Management, which indicates if the individual responds in a socially desirable manner; Infrequency, which is the amount of random responding; and Acquiescence, which suggests as to whether the responder is over-endorsing all true or fall responses. Finally, the 16PF also includes demographic variables such as level of education, ethnicity, household income, and current employment status, which assists with contextualizing the individual’s traits.

With regard to the evidence of need for the current study, previous research has found 16PF profiles and typologies specific to patients seen in marital therapy. The results of the study conducted by Craig and Olson (1995) indicate that couples seeking marital therapy appear to be significantly more tense, anxious, worrisome, suspicious, bold, and shrewd than normal persons in the 16PF standardization sample. By contrast, research has found that the 16 Personality Factors for couples in stable marriages are more commonly positively correlated with score for factors of guilt-

proneness, conservativeness, warmth, surgency, and suspiciousness (Cattell and Nesselrode, 1967).

### **The 16PF Couple's Counseling Report**

The 16 Personality Factors Couple's Counseling Report (16PF CCR) is ideally suited for use in relationship counseling and provides computer-generated interpretation of each partner's responses. The measure provides insight into each partner's personality and their overall levels of satisfaction in the relationship, thus it is an important tool in the treatment planning process as it provided valuable objective feedback to each member of the partnership. Research has shown personality qualities are related to relationship dynamics and behaviors. Thus, the 16PF CCR combines the most current version of the 16PF with additional questions that address relationship history and satisfaction. This report differs from an individually administered 16PF because it takes both partners' individual responses, compares them and provides satisfaction and compatibility scores, helping to focus the treatment protocols and counseling process. The 16PF CCR also includes a Relationship Satisfaction Rating section, which the 16PF does not include. The Relationship Satisfaction Rating is created by each member rating eleven independent areas of satisfaction and selects one area that, if addressed, would most improve their current relationship satisfaction. Individual areas of satisfaction, which are rated on a nine-point scale ranging from totally unsatisfied to totally satisfied, include the themes of Alcohol and Drug Use, Division of Roles, Time Together, Children, Sex, Extended Family, Caring and Affection, Finances, Communication, Overall Satisfaction, and speculation on their

partner's overall level of satisfaction. These scores are useful for determining where personalities may contribute to conflict in the relationship, where they may enhance the relationship, or assist in identifying expectations within the marriage. The 16PF CCR includes a Similarity score which calculates the similar personality factors of the couple. The Similarity score can range from a 1, which represents low similarity, to 10, which represents high similarity, and any number in between. This measurement also provides a Relationship Adjustment score that is calculated from each partner's response to Scale C, Emotional Stability, and Scale Q1, Openness to Change. The Relationship Adjustment Score can range from 1, which is suggestive of low adjustment, to a 10, which is suggestive of high adjustment. This scale provides valuable information regarding the degree to which a couple is able to adapt to the collaborative component of the relationship. The specific relationship questions on this measure help the couple and therapist target areas that are causing dissatisfaction and prioritize the immediacy of addressing these issues.

While the 16PF CCR also includes general demographic questions like household income level, education level, employment status, and race/ethnicity, it also includes nine questions that pertain specifically to relationship demographics such as number of children from past relationships, number of children from current relationship, status of current relationship, and length of current relationship.

Another important component of the 16PF CCR assessment process is the direct feedback to the couple. The feedback provided on the aforementioned areas allows the couple to better understand how their personal qualities may be impacting

their relationship. Accurate feedback can also facilitate a partner's discovery that their self-perceptions are inconsistent with their partners' perceptions of them. To enhance the helpfulness of the 16PF CCR, Jones (1979) recommended each partner complete an additional 16PF CCR in which they answer questions based on what they believe to be their partner's view of him/her. Jones (1979) believes this additional step adds supplementary information that illuminates behaviors and thought patterns that contribute to conflict and miscommunications. When this measurement is paired with an appropriate counseling environment it can be effective in increasing relationship satisfaction.

### **Previous 16PF and 16PF CCR Marital Research**

Over the last four decades researchers have consistently used the 16PF to better understand the personalities of married couples. Cattell and Nesselroade (1967) administered the 16PF to 102 self-identified happily married couples and 37 self-identified unhappy couples. Results revealed that eight scales were positively correlated for the happy couples, including Factor B (Reasoning), Factor C (Emotional Stability), Factor F (Liveliness), Factor G (Rule-Consciousness), Factor H (Social Boldness), Factor M (Abstractedness), Factor Q<sub>1</sub> (Openness to Change), and Factor Q<sub>3</sub> (Perfectionism). Unhappy couples, on the other hand, had only two positively correlated scales, Factor O (Apprehension) and Factor Q<sub>1</sub> (Openness to Change), and three negatively correlated scales, Factor A (Warmth), Factor F (Liveliness), and Factor L (Vigilance).



Craig and Olson (1995) administered the 16PF to 145 patients seen in marital therapy, comparing the mean profiles of husbands and wives to examine potential spousal personality differences. Results indicated that there were no significant personality differences between the husbands and wives in their study.

Additionally, Cattell and Schuerger (2003) conducted a literature review on 16PF scores for couples in counseling, highlighting several salient findings. To begin, couples that score similarly on the 16PF are more likely to experience relational satisfaction. Moreover, satisfied and unsatisfied couples usually score differently on several 16PF scales—satisfied couples score higher than unsatisfied couples on Factor C (Emotional Stability), and lower on Factor L (Vigilance), Factor O (Apprehension), and Factor Q<sub>4</sub> (Tension). Also, many 16PF scale differences between couples are significantly correlated with marital dissatisfaction, such as Factor B (Reasoning), Factor C (Emotional Stability), Factor I (Sensitivity), Factor M (Abstractedness), Factor L (Vigilance), and Factor Q<sub>3</sub> (Perfectionism). Finally, differences on Factor A (Warmth), Factor H (Social Boldness), and Factor Q<sub>2</sub> (Self-Reliance) were found to be associated with increased stress between partners.

A limited amount of research has been conducted specifically on the 16PF Couple's Counseling Report in relation to Marital Satisfaction, Relationship Adjustment, and Personality Similarity. Previous studies include seven unpublished doctoral dissertations studying a range of populations including gay and lesbian couples, female and male combat veterans following deployment, and a non-clinical sample of females and males. The findings are quite variable among the differing

population and are as follows. Some researchers found a significant positive relationship between Relationship Adjustment and Personality Similarity, as well as Marital Satisfaction and Personality Similarity (Mulholland, 2015; Field, 2013). This is somewhat consistent with other researchers who found significant positive relationships between the broad factor of Marital Satisfaction and specific personality variable traits such as Emotional Stability, while other studies found significant relationships with certain satisfaction variables such as finances, division of roles, caring and affection, and sex (Arnett, 2008; Field, 2013; Garofalo, 2014). Further, one study found that emotional reactivity, a characteristic of a low score of personality Factor C (Emotional Stability), leads to poorer relationship adjustment in same sex couples (Shah, 2009). Alexander (2015) found men and women rate themselves higher on various personality traits including dominance and social boldness for men while women perceived themselves to be more abstract. However, there have been contradictions observed in the results as Moore (2015) found a significant negative correlation between Marital Satisfaction and Relationship Adjustment. In total, the previous research supports the need for expanding the literature to incorporate a clinical population and seek consistent empirical findings, which further supports the need for the present study.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to clarify the factors that contribute to and affect marital satisfaction and relationship adjustment among females engaging in marital therapy with their spouses. Increased knowledge of the inherent and extrinsic

factors that affect an individual's likelihood for relationship satisfaction will assist in marital therapy by reinforcing marital satisfaction while inhibiting dissolution. Specifically, awareness of personality domains and demographic factors that contribute to marital dissatisfaction can direct individuals toward behaviors that lead to satisfaction and allow for preventative measures to be considered (e.g. entering premarital counseling). Furthermore, knowledge of how satisfaction in specific life areas (e.g. time together, finances, division of roles) contribute to overall satisfaction can assist marital therapists in prioritizing adjustments in certain life areas relevant to the individual and couple. Overall, this research should assist with identifying a variety of factors that contribute to satisfied and dissatisfied married couples engaging in marital therapy, thus informing marriage therapists about how to most effectively meet their client's needs.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the findings from the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. A significant relationship between overall Marital Satisfaction scores and nine individual item Satisfaction scores will exist. This hypothesis will be tested using Multiple Regression Analysis.
2. There will be a significant relationship between overall Marital Satisfaction score and the sixteen Primary Personality Factors. This hypothesis will be tested using Multiple Regression Analysis.

3. There will be a significant relationship between the Personality Similarity Score and the sixteen Primary Personality Factors. This hypothesis will be tested using Multiple Regression Analysis.
4. There will be a significant relationship between the Relationship Adjustment Scores and the sixteen Personality Factors. This hypothesis will be tested using Multiple Regression Analysis.
5. There will be no significant relationship between the scores on the overall Marital Satisfaction scores, Personality Similarity scores, and Relationship Adjustment scores. This hypothesis will be tested using a One- Way ANOVA analysis.
6. There will be a significant relationship between demographic variables of length of relationship, number of children, and Marital Satisfaction. Differences in overall Marital Satisfaction scores will be tested with either independent T-tests or ANOVAs.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

All data used for the current research was archival from the office of Richard T. Elmore, Jr., Ph.D. Participants for this research entered marital therapy and completed the 16PF CCR as an introductory requirement for treatment between the years of 2014 to 2018. To control for variables related to gender and sexuality, only heterosexual females were analyzed. Participants included a variety of ethnic backgrounds, religiosity, and age groups, with participating 82 couples overall. The

sample isolated for this research consisted of 82 females who were currently married to their partner during their engagement in marital therapy.

### **Instruments/Measures**

The 16 Personality Factor Couples Counseling Report Questionnaire (16PF CCR), a non-clinical personality measure, was utilized for this research. For all participants, the 16PF CCR was a required introductory component for marital therapy.

### **Design/Plan of Analysis**

A significant amount of information and variables were analyzed in this research, thus this is perceived as an exploratory analysis. As noted, multiple regression, analysis of variance, independent t-test, and Pearson correlation analyses were used to test the hypotheses.

### **Procedure**

Participants were administered the 16PF CCR via the IPAT computer program at their first marital therapy session. They were instructed to complete the 16PF CCR independent from their spouses. Once score output was obtained from IPAT, the couple was provided with feedback regarding awareness of personality factors and how they may interfere with certain areas of functioning and satisfaction.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Frequencies**

The descriptive frequencies and statistics of the sample demographics are displayed in Table 2 and Table 3. A total of 82 females in marital therapy completed

the 16PF-CCR with their male spouses. A large majority of the sample is Caucasian/White (82.9%), with 8.5% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, 3.7% identifying as African American, 1.2% (1 participant) identifying as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2.4% identifying as Other. Of the 82 participants, all were married or in a committed relationship with the individual they were engaging in marital therapy with. Regarding relationship length, 19.5% reported being in a relationship for 0 to 2 years, 22% reported being in a relationship for 3 to 7 years, 18.3% reported being in a relationship for 8 to 14 years, 19.5 reported being in a relationship for 15 to 25 years, and 19.5% reported being in a relationship for 25 plus years. For most females, the present relationship was their first (31.7%), second (32.9%), or third (25.6%) committed relationship. For 4.9% each this was their fourth or fifth commitment for these females.

In terms of education, 15.9% endorsed their highest level of education as a High School Diploma or GED, 26.8% had their Associates or a technical degree, 24.4% reported having a Bachelor's degree, 11% reported completing some graduate coursework, and 20.7% had a graduate degree. Regarding occupation, the majority of the females were working full time (47.6%), while 14.6% worked part-time and 18.3% were homemakers. Additionally, 13.4% were retired and 2.4% were unemployed. For household income 57.3% earned \$80,000 and above a year, whereas 18.3% had household incomes that fell within \$60,000 and \$79,000 a year and 11% reported yearly incomes between \$40,000 and \$59,000. The final demographic variable to be

considered is whether the females had children. Following analysis, it appears the majority of females (78%) have children, whereas 17% did not.

### **Hypothesis 1**

This study hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the overall Marital Satisfaction scores and the nine individual item Satisfaction scores. Means and standard deviations for the satisfaction areas can be found in Table 4. The relationship between overall Marital Satisfaction scores and nine individual item satisfaction score was tested via standard multiple regression analysis. The overall model was significant [ $F(9, 69) = 18.99, p < .001$ ] and the hypothesis is supported. With an  $R^2$  of .712, 71.2% of the variance in the overall level of satisfaction is explained by the individual satisfaction areas. Each individual variable was analyzed separately. This analysis showed there was a significant relationship between overall Marital Satisfaction and eight of the nine individual satisfaction items. These relationships can be found in Table 5. Caring and Affection, Time Together, Sex, Division of Roles, and Problem Solving and Communication had a moderate positive relationship with overall Marital Satisfaction. Finances, Extended Family, and Children had a small positive relationship with overall Marital Satisfaction. Further analysis demonstrates that Time Together,  $b = .225, t(79) = 2.810, p < .01$ , predicted overall Marital satisfaction in a model that included all nine variables and explained 43.4% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .434, F(1, 80) = 61.431, p < .001$ . Caring and Affection,  $b = .410, t(79) = 4.970, p < .001$ , predicted Overall Marital satisfaction in a model that included all nine variables and explained 54% of

the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .538$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 93.148$ ,  $p < .001$ . Division of Roles,  $b = .166$ ,  $t(79) = 2.127$ ,  $p < .05$ , predicted overall Marital satisfaction in a model that included all nine variables and explained 26% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .264$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 28.707$ ,  $p < .001$ . Sex,  $b = .156$ ,  $t(79) = 2.444$ ,  $p < .05$ , predicted overall marital satisfaction in a model that included all nine variables and explained 31% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .312$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 35.827$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### **Hypothesis 2**

For the present study it was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the overall Marital Satisfaction score and the sixteen Primary Personality Factors. Means and standard deviations for the personality factors can be found in Table 6. A multiple regression analysis was calculated to test this relationship. The overall model was not significant [ $F(16, 65) = 1.097$ ,  $p > .05$ ] and the hypothesis was not supported. There was also no significant relationship among individual factors.

### **Hypothesis 3**

For the present study it was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the Personality Similarity scores and the sixteen Primary Personality Factors. A multiple regression analysis was calculated to test this relationship and the hypothesis was not found to be supported. The overall model was not significant [ $F(16, 65) = 1.237$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Additionally, there was no significant relationship among individual factors.



#### **Hypothesis 4**

For the present study, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the Relationship Adjustment scores and the sixteen Primary Personality Factors. A multiple regression analysis was calculated to test this relationship. The overall model was significant [ $F(16, 64) = 46.699, p < .001$ ], thus hypothesis was supported. Emotional Stability shows the strongest relationship with Relationship Adjustment,  $b = 1.045, t(79) = 18.935, p < .001$ , with a large positive relationship,  $r(79) = +.870, p < .001$ . Openness to Change was found to have a significant moderate positive with Relationship Adjustment. Dominance, Liveliness, Rule Consciousness, and Social Boldness were found to have a significant small positive relationship with Relationship Adjustment. Vigilance, Privatness, Apprehension, Self-Reliance, and Tension were all observed to have a significant small negative relationship with Relationship Adjustment. These relationships can be found in Table 7. Additional analysis also demonstrates that Emotional Stability predicted Relationship Adjustment in a model that included all sixteen variables and explained 76% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .757, F(1, 80) = 246.154, p < .001$ . Additionally variables that significantly predicted Relationship Adjustment include Apprehension,  $b = .306, t(79) = 7.347, p < .001$ , explaining 8% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .080, F(1, 80) = 6.832, p < .05$ , as well as Openness to Change,  $b = .206, t(79) = 4.511, p < .001$ , explaining 27% of the variance of overall marital satisfaction,  $R^2 = .270, F(1, 80) = 29.171, p < .001$ .

## **Hypothesis 5**

It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference among the scores on the overall Marital Satisfaction scores, Personality Similarity score, and Relationship adjustment score. This hypothesis was not supported, as there was a significant relationship of Relationship Adjustment to Personality Similarity and they were observed to have a moderate positive relationship,  $r(79) = +.269, p < .05$ . However, no significant relationship was found of overall Marital Satisfaction and Relationship Adjustment  $r(79) = +.56, p > .05$ , as well as overall Marital Satisfaction and Personality Similarity,  $r(79) = -.20, p > .05$ .

## **Hypothesis 6**

Analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between overall Marital Satisfaction and various demographic variables. The demographic variables that were analyzed include length of relationship and existence of children.

**Length of relationship.** An one-way between subjects ANOVA was utilized to compare length of relationship and overall Marital Satisfaction ratings. The model showed a significant effect of length of relationship on overall Marital Satisfaction scores [ $F(4, 76) = 4.382, p < .01$ ]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean overall Marital Satisfaction score for women who had been in a relationship for 0 to 2 years ( $M = 6.13, SD = 1.893$ ) was significantly different than those in a relationship for 8 to 14 years ( $M = 3.60, SD = 1.682$ ) and 15 to 25 years ( $M = 3.63, SD = 1.893$ ). Overall, women who has been in a relationship for 0 to 2 years

were significantly more satisfied compared to those who had been in a relationship for 8 to 25 years.

**Children.** The groups which identified whether one individual had a child or not, regardless of whether the child lived in the home, and regardless of whether the child was from a previous relationship, or a child with the current partner were all considered equally in this analysis. An independent t-test was calculated to compare overall Marital Satisfaction score differences between females who have children to those who do not. The analysis revealed no significant difference in the overall Marital Satisfaction scores for females who have children ( $M = 4.58, SD = 2.287$ ) and females who do not ( $M = 4.57, SD = 2.209$ ). Thus there is no significant impact regarding of the existence of children on overall Marital Satisfaction,  $t(76) = .010, p > .05$ .

### **Discussion**

The present study investigated the predictors of overall marital satisfaction, personality similarity to one's partner, and relationship adjustment among females who engaged in marital therapy. With limited research on dyadic relationships, specifically within a clinical context, this study aimed to add to the narrow body of literature, specifically with the respect to how these predictors may be incorporated into the marital therapy process. Multiple significant findings from this study can be added to an otherwise limited research base, while even the non-significant results can be continued sources for further study. The following includes a review and discussion of the results, limitations of the present study, and areas for future research.

For females, the most significant satisfaction factors that were found to be positively related to overall satisfaction include caring and affection, time together, division of roles, and sex. This is commensurate with some of the literature, which suggests positive emotional expressivity (Lavalekar, Kulkarni, & Japtap, 2010) and an egalitarian dynamic within the relationship (LeBaron, Miller, and Yorgason, 2014) often lead to higher levels of marital happiness and satisfaction for the female population. Moreover, research has found satisfied marriages to include effective communication, ability to manage conflict, loyalty, and sexual satisfaction (Gottman, 1993; Sharlin, Kaslow, & Hammerschmidt, 2000), which is consistent with the findings of the present study.

In consideration of personality factors, the present study found no significant factors which predicted overall marital satisfaction among the sixteen Primary Personality Factors of the 16PF CCR. The literature is limited with regard to personality variables that predict marital satisfaction perhaps reflecting the complexity of intimate relationships. Instead, it has been suggested that relationships are composed of individuals who share similar demographic variables such as education, race, or religion (Antill, 1993). Despite this, the controversial and uncertain nature of the personality similarity theory versus complementary theory contention within couple's research continues to challenge researchers. Although the non-significant results of the present study are unable to assist the literature in a decisive conclusion, they illuminate the need for further investigation.

With regard to females, personality traits are not related to similarity to one's partner. In the present study there was no relationship found between an individual's personality traits and her similarity score (i.e. how similar she is to her partner). This suggests that, of the 16PF CCR personality factors, no single personality trait is related to or predictive of the characteristic of being similar to others. However, future studies with divergent personality measures should be conducted, as personality variables not measured by the 16PF CCR may be related to partner personality similarity.

For females, several personality factors were found to be significantly related to relationship adjustment in the present study. The Relationship Adjustment Score is statistically derived from the 16PF Primary Personality Factors of Emotional Stability and Openness to Change. Accordingly, it is not unexpected to find those two factors had the strongest positive relationship to the relationship adjustment score in this study. With regard to Emotional Stability, those with higher scores on the personality factor have been found to regulate their emotions in a balanced and adaptive manner. This has direct implications for the efficacy of their relationship adjustment, as primary means of adapting requires one to effectively managing their emotions, as well as maintain their own perspectives while accepting and compromising with a partner's differences. Additional personality factors of Social Boldness, Liveliness, and Rule Consciousness were also found to have a positive relationship with relationship adjustment, while factors of Vigilance, Privatness, Tension, and Apprehension possess negative relationships. With consideration to the findings, the

negative correlations are directly consistent with previous research. Cattell and Schuerger (2003) found couples to score lower on Factor L (Vigilance), Factor O (Apprehension), and Factor Q<sub>4</sub> (Tension) when they reported more marital satisfaction. Explanations of the personality relationship are offered, theorizing that the rule-consciousness component may be explained by the ability to follow the ground rules and expectations of one's partner and of the relationship, which in turn, allows for greater relationship adjustment. Social boldness likely helps predict relationship adjustment as it has been found that high scorers are typically outgoing and gregarious, spending most of their time in social encounters, and may not recognize rejection or disapproval by others because they are "thick-skinned." While the implications of these personality correlates are postulation, the results merit more research regarding these variables to clarify the nature of the relationship among the personality factors.

The present study provided support for a positive relationship between Relationship Adjustment and Personality Similarity. Although this is not a causal relationship, it suggests females who have an increased ability to adjust and adapt in their relationships are likely have more similarity to their partners, or those who are more similar to their partners are able to more easily adapt within the relationship. It is postulated that this finding may be the result of convergence of partner personality traits over the course of the relationship, which then aids in relationship adjustment. Gonzaga, Campos, and Bradbury (2007) found that being similar to a partner at a moment in time, or converging toward a partner across time, seems to have positive

effects on relationship functioning. As the realm of relationship adjustment has been studied only marginally, in combination with the opposing theories regarding partner similarity, it is recommended that the nature of this relationship be pursued in further research.

In consideration of the interaction between specific demographic variables and overall marital satisfaction, it was found that marital satisfaction demonstrated a pattern to decrease as one's length of relationship increased over time. Mean satisfaction ratings discernably decrease from 0 to 2 years to 3 to 7 years through the 8 to 14 year mark. From relationships lasting 8 to 14 years through those lasting up to 25 years, overall marital satisfaction appears to decrease at a slower and steadier rate. These findings do not follow the expected U-shaped pattern found in previous studies (Hafner & Spence, 1988; Jose & Alfons, 2007; Levensen et al., 1993). This may be due to the limited length of relationship categorizations on the 16PF CCR demographic section, which has a general category for 25 years or more without further specification. Previous studies have identified a resurgence in marital satisfaction around retirement age or the 30-year mark of a relationship. However, without further categorization of the demographic factors on the 16PF CCR, this pattern was not observable in the present study. In light of this, the current analysis appears to follow the first half of the U-shaped satisfaction pattern, just preceding the expected period of satisfaction resurgence.

The existence of children does not impact a female's overall satisfaction in a relationship according to the present study. This takes into consideration whether one

partner had a child or not, regardless of whether the child lived in the home, and regardless of whether the child was from a previous relationship, as well as if the child was conceived with one's current partner. This finding is not consistent with literature; however, these outcomes are also not directly comparable with the literature findings. The literature suggests one's relationship satisfaction fluctuates and follows a curvilinear trajectory over the course of time when a child is born, enters adolescence, and then leaves the home. This is also impacted by the number of children present during the marriage (Levenson, Cartensen, & Gottman, 1993). Additional studies have also found the presence of children to induce heightened stress levels and as a result marital satisfaction over time due to parenting roles, childcare, and lifestyle changes following the birth of children (Blum and Mehrabian's, 1999; Johnson, 2012). Unfortunately, the 16PF CCR does not incorporate demographic information regarding the number of children an individual has or their respective ages. To merely identify the existence of children does not allow for investigation of the meaningful impact of children on a relationship.

### **Limitations**

The present study should be interpreted in light of several key limitations. First, all participants were entering marital therapy at the time of completion of the 16PF CCR, thus it is expected that high levels of marital distress and dissatisfaction would be present. Research indicates the most commonly reported reasons for seeking marital therapy are interpersonal difficulties, especially communication problems and lack of emotional affection, thus it could also be expected that satisfaction in those



specific areas would be decreased. An additional factor limiting the present study is the focus on individual factors without consideration to the complex dynamic between partners and of the relationship. The failure to consider the interactions of the couple leaves the present study vulnerable to an unbalanced perspective regarding the precise nature of the analyzed relationship variables. Moreover, the sample was disproportionately Caucasian (84% of the total sample) and from east central Florida, thus the results may not be generalizable to other populations.

### **Clinical Implications and Directions for Future Research**

Despite the limitations discussed, the present study may assist with a better understanding of the personality variables that predict marital satisfaction and adjustment in the following ways. First, husbands and wives can benefit significantly from objective knowledge about the personality variables that predict marital adjustment in order to gain insight into how negative personality features may influence their own, and their partner's, marital functioning. This information may serve to increase the efficacy of treatment outcomes and motivate spouses to work towards changing problematic personality characteristics (Cattell and Schuerger 2003; Knabb et al. 2011). As Cattell and Schuerger (2003) noted, spouses can develop a more compassionate understanding of their personality differences, viewing them as mere differences rather than as a reason for marriage dissolution, in order to mitigate the cycle of blame that is common within distressed marriages. Additionally, understanding how personality may predict marital adjustment can significantly improve premarital counseling programs (Knabb et al. 2011). In particular, premarital

counseling that focuses on personality assessment can better educate couples on the ways in which their own, and their partner's, personality features may impact marital functioning (Bradbury and Karney 2004; Knabb et al. 2011). As Bradbury and Karney (2004) posited, premarital counseling programs that educate couples on the relationship between personality and marital adjustment are much more helpful than waiting to treat distressed, strained, and highly escalated marriages in psychotherapy, as was the case in the present study. With consideration of this information, psychoeducation regarding the personality factors of Emotional Stability, Openness to Change, Social Boldness, and Liveliness along with bolstering behavioral correlates of the same may assist premarital therapist in establishing early relationship adjustment patterns in new couples. Thus, reducing their risk for discord and divorce through the trajectory of the relationship.

Overall, future research is necessary in numerous areas related to relationship variables, including satisfaction, similarity, and adjustment, as clinical studies on couples and relationships are limited. This research should focus on the significance of both individual and dyadic factors that impact Marital Satisfaction, Personality Similarity, and Relationship Adjustment. It is strongly recommended that future studies utilizing the 16PF CCR incorporate the use of an additional demographic form in order to clarify the demographic limitations of the 16PF CCR form. Specifically, inquiries regarding the specific length of relationship including duration following 25 years, number of children, age of respective children, and number of children living in the home would assist in the analysis and clinical implications of these variables.

Additionally, the present study's findings could be strengthened with the incorporation of a more diverse sample, as well as incorporation of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual couples. This would serve to provide more information about the dynamics of race as well as sexuality differences; areas that are markedly limited in the literature. Subsequent research may also choose to analyze couples' distinct chief complaint or presenting problem when initiating treatment as this factor may have direct implications for the specific satisfaction areas that are disrupted within the relationship. Doss, Simpson, and Christensen (2004) suggest that a spouse's reasons for marital therapy merit careful assessment and coordination to assure that therapy is meeting the goals and expectations of both partners. Additionally, future studies may wish to measure how, if at all, marital therapy interventions impact personality, satisfaction, and marital adjustment over time, as the present study focused on the initial evaluation of these factors at the onset of treatment.

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Table 1  
*Personality Factor Scale Descriptions*

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Lower Scores (1 - 3)</b>	<b>Higher Scores (8 - 10)</b>
A: Warmth	Reserved, Impersonal, Distant	Warm, Outgoing, Attentive to Others
B: Reasoning	Concrete	Abstract
C: Emotional Stability	Reactive, Emotionally Changeable	Emotionally Stable, Adaptive, Mature
E: Dominance	Deferential, Cooperative, Avoids Conflict	Dominant, Forceful, Assertive
F: Liveliness	Serious, Restrained, Careful	Lively, Animated, Spontaneous
G: Rule-Consciousness	Expedient, Nonconforming	Rule-conscious, Dutiful
H: Social Boldness	Shy, Threat-sensitive, Timid	Socially Bold, Thick-skinned, Venturesome
I: Sensitivity	Utilitarian, Objective, Unsentimental	Sensitive, Aesthetic, Sentimental
L: Vigilance	Trusting, Unsuspecting, Accepting	Vigilant, Suspicious, Skeptical, Wary
M: Abstractedness	Grounded, Practical, Solution-focused	Abstracted, Idea-oriented, Imaginative
N: Privatness	Forthright, Genuine, Artless	Private, Discreet, Non-disclosing
O: Apprehension	Self-assured, Unworried, Complacent	Apprehensive, Self-doubting, Worried
Q1: Openness to Change	Traditional, Attached to Familiar	Open to Change, Experimenting
Q2: Self-Reliance	Group-oriented, Affiliative	Self-reliant, Solitary, Individualistic
Q3: Perfectionism	Tolerated Disorder, Unexacting, Flexible	Perfectionistic, Organized, Controlled
Q4: Tension	Relaxed, Placid, Patient	Tense, High Energy, Impatient, Driven
EX: Extraversion	Introverted	Extroverted
AX: Anxiety	Low Anxiety	High Anxiety
TM: Tough-Mindedness	Receptive, Open-Minded	Tough-Minded, Resolute
IN: Independence	Accommodating, Agreeable	Independent, Persuasive
SC: Self-Control	Unrestrained	Self-Controlled

Note: Adapted from the *16PF Couple's Counseling Report Administrator's Manual* (p. 18) by M.T. Russell and D.L. Karol, 1994, Champaign, IL: The Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Inc. Copyright by IPAT, Inc.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Frequencies for Females in Marital Therapy*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Race</b>		
African American	3	3.7%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	1.2%
Caucasian	68	82.9%
Hispanic or Latino	7	8.5%
Other	2	2.4%
<b>Relationship Length</b>		
0-2 years	16	19.5%
3-7 years	18	22.0%
8-14 years	15	18.3%
15-25 years	16	19.5%
25+ years	16	19.5%
<b>Number of Past Relationships</b>		
1	26	31.7%
2	27	32.9%
3	21	25.6%
4	4	4.9%
5+	4	4.9%
<b>Children</b>		
Yes	64	78%
No	14	17.1%
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Grade School	1	1.2%
High School/GED	13	15.9%
Associate's Degree	22	26.8%
Bachelor's Degree	20	24.4%
Graduate Course Work without Degree	9	11%
Graduate Degree	17	20.7%
<b>Employment</b>		
Full-time	39	47.6%
Part-time	12	14.6%
Homemaker	15	18.3%
Unemployed	2	2.4%
Retired	11	13.4%
Other	3	3.7%

*(continued on next page)*

Table 2 continued  
*Descriptive Frequencies for Females in Marital Therapy*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Income</b>		
\$0-9,999	1	1.2%
\$10,000-19,999	2	2.4%
\$20,000-39,999	7	8.5%
\$40,000-59,999	9	11.0%
\$60,000-79,999	15	18.3%
\$80,000 +	47	57.3%

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Overall Marital Satisfaction	4.61	2.226
Personality Similarity	6.76	2.169
Relationship Adjustment	4.16	1.593

Table 4  
*Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction Ratings*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Time Together	4.95	2.490
Problem Solving and Communication	3.56	2.286
Caring and Affection	4.38	2.549
Division of Roles	5.09	2.477
Finances	4.81	2.661
Sex	4.61	2.780
Extended Family	5.43	2.291
Children	5.86	2.368
Alcohol or Drug Use	6.53	2.606

Table 5  
*Correlations Between Overall Marital Satisfaction Score and Nine Individual Satisfaction Items*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Overall Marital Satisfaction Correlation</b>
Time Together	<b>.659</b>
Problem Solving and Communication	<b>.452</b>
Caring and Affection	<b>.757</b>
Division of Roles	<b>.516</b>
Finances	<b>.231</b>
Sex	<b>.559</b>
Extended Family	<b>.233</b>
Children	<b>.230</b>
Alcohol or Drug Use	.100

*Note.* Correlations in bold were significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)



Table 6  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Personality Factors*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<i>Global Factors</i>		
Extraversion (EX)	5.29	1.689
Anxiety (AX)	6.22	1.826
Tough-Mindedness (TM)	5.55	1.737
Independence (IN)	5.21	1.661
Self-Control (SC)	5.63	1.427
<i>Primary Factors</i>		
Warmth (A)	5.63	1.552
Reasoning (B)	5.21	1.831
Emotional Stability (C)	4.07	1.438
Dominance (E)	4.98	1.757
Liveliness (F)	5.27	1.595
Rule-Consciousness (G)	5.4	1.624
Social Boldness (H)	5.65	1.933
Sensitivity (I)	5.84	1.598
Vigilance (L)	5.56	1.912
Abstractedness (M)	5.32	1.784
Privateness (N)	5.51	1.759
Apprehension (O)	6.01	1.746
Openness to Change (Q1)	5.26	1.831
Self-Reliance (Q2)	6.13	1.769
Perfectionism (Q3)	5.76	1.816
Tension (Q4)	5.35	1.46
<b>(goes with hyp 2)</b>		

Table 7  
*Correlations Between Relationship Adjustment Score and Sixteen Primary Personality Factors*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Relationship Adjustment Score Correlation</b>
Warmth	+.140
Reasoning	+.172
Emotional Stability	<b>+.870</b>
Dominance	<b>+.276</b>
Liveliness	<b>+.194</b>
Rule-Consciousness	<b>+.205</b>
Social Boldness	<b>+.230</b>
Sensitivity	+.014
Vigilance	<b>-.295</b>
Abstractedness	-.008
Privateness	<b>-.385</b>
Apprehension	<b>-.282</b>
Openness to Change	<b>+.519</b>
Self-Reliance	<b>-.314</b>
Perfectionism	+.069
Tension	<b>-.319</b>

*Note.* Correlations in bold were significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)