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# Personality Characteristics and Relationship Satisfaction of Individuals who Attended the Preparación de Novios Weekend Workshop

Rosalba Mada  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Rosalba Mada

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Personality Characteristics and Relationship Satisfaction of Individuals who Attended the

Preparación de Novios Weekend Workshop

by

Rosalba Mada

MA, Northern Arizona University, 2002

BS, University of Arizona, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

Research is limited and inconsistent when identifying basic constructs that improve relationship satisfaction; there is also limited research on marriage education efforts that address effects of premarital programs on relationship satisfaction and how they are influenced by personality. Research questions in this study explored the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction and the relationship among personality characteristics and affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction, as measured with the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) and Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised. The family systems theory provided the theoretical foundation. A convenience sample of ( $N = 58$ ) of individuals, who attended the premarital education program, Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, was recruited. While overall regression analyses were not statistically significant, prohibiting the rejection of null hypotheses, 3 independent variables emerged that supported the results of existing literature and may be useful for future research: affective communication and gender, role orientation and independence, and aggression and independence. These findings have implications for positive social change by informing the efforts of therapists, counselors, and others working with couples, who may note the areas of greatest influence on relationship satisfaction and focus on those problem areas in a relationship with potentially greater impact on satisfaction.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this project to my husband, Alejandro Mada, for his unending support and love, encouragement, and push to finish, and also to my children, Alejandro Jr. and Lisa Marie, for their patience and love. This project is additionally dedicated to my parents, Pedro and Rosalba, and sister, Xochitl, for their unconditional love and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this project to my good friends and fellow classmates, Dr. Marilyn Card and Dr. Laurie Rogoff. There are not enough words to describe the importance of having you on my side throughout this process.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

This quantitative study focused on potential relationships between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop (see Appendix A) within the last 5 years. Researchers have identified several constructs as important contributors to relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction. They include personality characteristics, affective communication, gender role orientation, problem solving, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Dew, 2011; Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2011; Minnotte, Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, & Kiger, 2010; O'Rourke, Claxton, Chou, Smith, & Hadjistavropoulos, 2011; Snyder, 1997). While these constructs tend to have an impact on relationship satisfaction in either a positive or negative way when viewed in isolation, their influence may vary when treated as a whole.

A potential positive social change resulting from this study includes additional information on constructs that are necessary to help adults establish healthier long-term relationships. Stable intimate relationships are more likely to reduce stress and anxiety in individuals, allowing them to feel content, happy, and even overjoyed, despite some negative conditions (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich, Papp, & Cummings, 2011). For many adults, their romantic relationship is the most important and enduring social relationship of their life. The quality of intimate relationships has been linked to lower rates of depression, greater life satisfaction, and being a critical factor of personal



adjustment and well-being (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich, Papp, & Cummings, 2011).

In this chapter, I provide the background of the problem, a problem statement, and an explanation of the purpose of the study. I identify independent and dependent variables and present the research questions and hypotheses. I discuss the significance of the study and explain the theoretical framework, and I provide definitions of key terms and describe the nature of the study as well as assumptions and limitations.

### **Background**

Relationship satisfaction varies greatly from person to person. What does it mean to be satisfied in a relationship? Who decides what a satisfied relationship should look like? Despite these questions, researchers have attempted to identify common constructs among individuals in order to provide a guide for healthy and satisfying relationships. They include personality characteristics, affective communication, gender role orientation, problem solving, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction (Caughlin et al., 2000; Dew, 2011; Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2011; Minnotte et al., 2010; O'Rourke et al., 2011; Snyder, 1997).

Overall, studies have shown that premarital education significantly correlated with lower levels of marital conflict and divorce and that it seemed to provide higher levels of marital quality. Several authors noted that premarital education led to lower levels of destructive conflict and higher levels of interpersonal spousal commitment (Fawcett, Hawkins, Blanchard, & Carroll, 2010; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley & Peterson,

2013; Stanley, Amato, Johnson, & Markman, 2006). Results showed that the ways in which couples attended to positive and negative events in their marriage often were predictors of divorce (Bischoff, 2002). Premarital education programs generally aim at reducing the harmful influence of risk factors that individuals may bring to their relationships and, thereby, improve adults' and children's quality of life (Markman et al., 2013; Stanley, 2001).

Past researchers found that personality characteristics are an important part of successful and satisfying relationships, even though they have not identified a set group of characteristics as “must haves” in a satisfying relationship (Caughlin et al., 2000; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Rosowsky, King, Coolidge, Rhoades, & Segal, 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007). A gap in the literature, however, pertained to the level of relationship satisfaction for adults who have attended a premarital workshop within 5 years. Notably, almost no studies have examined the relationship between relationship satisfaction and personality characteristics as related to adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years (Baucom, Sevier, Eldridge, & Doss, 2011; Bodenmann, Bradbury, & Pihet, 2009).

Therefore, I intended this study to provide additional information on what the relationship might be between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction for adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The Preparación de Novios weekend workshop is a premarital program designed to improve interpersonal relationship functioning, with the hope that those who have attended will use the skills learned to enhance their relationships (Galanakis, Stalikas,

Kallia, Karagianni, & Karela, 2009; Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011).

Furthermore, this program seeks to reduce the divorce rate by providing individuals with skills to make informed decisions regarding long-term commitment. Additionally, the weekend workshop provides tools to help the participants form positive nuclear families (Galanakis, Stalikas, Kallia, Karagianni, & Karela, 2009; Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011). This information can help adults to maintain healthier long-term relationships, which may create a ripple effect of happier and healthier individuals, who interact positively in social situations and the work environment. This, in turn, may lead to increased productivity and financial stability for the individuals and create a stable home environment for children and the elderly (Galanakis, Stalikas, Kallia, Karagianni, & Karela, 2009; Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

Research on the relationship or the impact that personality characteristics exert on relationship satisfaction has been limited. Some of the findings have been contradictory when identifying basic constructs that improve relationship satisfaction. While some researchers found that similar personality characteristics created relationship satisfaction (Gattis et al., 2004), others revealed that complementary personality characteristics improved relationships and that couples who were similar in personality characteristics reported reduced relationship satisfaction over time (Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

Research on the effectiveness of relationship enhancement and dissatisfaction-prevention programs has been limited, particularly research that includes the effects of

personality characteristics on relationship satisfaction (Gattis et al., 2004). Notably, many studies about marriage education efforts did not specifically address effects of premarital programs on relationships or how they were influenced by personality (Fawcett et al., 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to examine the relationship between personality and relationship satisfaction in adults who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The focus was on the influence of personality characteristics, time since attendance of the program, gender, ethnicity, and age as the independent variables, and on relationship satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction as the dependent variables.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years?

Null Hypothesis 1 ( $H_01$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has no statistically significant relationship with marital satisfaction, as measured with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R for adults who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

Alternate Hypothesis 1 ( $H_{a1}$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has a statistically significant relationship with marital satisfaction, as measured with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R for adults who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

RQ2: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction?

Null Hypothesis 2 ( $H_{02}$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has no statistically significant relationship with affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction, as measured with the eight subscales of the MSI-R among those who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

Alternate Hypothesis 2 ( $H_{a2}$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has a statistically significant relationship with affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual

dissatisfaction, as measured with the eight subscales of the MSI-R among those who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

### **Variables**

Five independent variables and nine dependent variables were examined in this nonexperimental quantitative study.

#### **Independent Variables**

One independent variable, personality profile—with five categorical levels comprising (a) extroversion, (b) independence, (c) tough-mindedness, (d) self-control, and (e) anxiety—was assessed with the global personality factors of the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; 16PF; Cattell, Cattell, & Cattell, 2009). Length of time since attending the program, ethnicity, gender, and age (the last two as naturally occurring variables) were the remaining four independent variables. They were obtained with a demographics survey, administered to each participant.

#### **Dependent Variables**

One dependent variable, relationship satisfaction, was assessed with the global distress scale of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised (MSI-R; Snyder, 2004). The remaining eight dependent variables—affectionate communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction—were assessed with the corresponding subscales of the MSI-R.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Family Systems Theory (FST)**

The theoretical framework undergirding this study was family systems theory (FST) of Murray Bowen (as cited in Papero, 1990). The FST describes families as emotional units, or systems, with complex interactions and interdependencies. According to the FST, the family systems can be made up of varying numbers of people who interact in multiple ways and with different purposes. Notably, the family is viewed as an emotional unit in which people react to each other's needs, expectations, and distress (Papero, 1990; Rabstajnek, 2012). In general, humans exist within the context of relationships and are, therefore, responsive and reactive to inputs from friends, partners, and children. This type of social connection affects both mental and physical health (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). Marriage constitutes one of the most central and enduring social relationships for most adults (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010).

The FST has guided this research by providing a basic explanation for individual processes of emotional stimuli as well as for the obtained information regarding personal experiences from a systems perspective. It facilitated the understanding of links that the participants have established to their social and physical environments and the multiple environments and contexts that influence individual levels of relationship satisfaction. The FST could also shed light on personality adaptation to environmental and relationship demands. In turn, this understanding helped in assessing how individual processes and personality adaptations to these processes impacted intimate relationships,

particularly through third-party interventions such as the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop (Magnavita, 2012; Wong, 2009).

### **Nature of the Study**

In this quantitative study, I examined the impact of the independent variables (personality characteristics, time since attending the program, gender, ethnicity, and age) on the dependent variables (relationship satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction). The personality characteristics were assessed with the global factor scales of the 16PF. A demographics questionnaire requiring six interval responses was used to identify the remaining independent variables. The level of relationship satisfaction was measured with the global dissatisfaction scales of the MSI-R. The eight subscales of the MSI-R were used to obtain scores for the aforementioned corresponding dependent variables.

Study participants were recruited among individuals who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The population for this study consisted primarily of persons of Hispanic background whose primary language was Spanish. The study focused on individual responses, not couples responses. The participants represented various ages, ethnicities, and genders. They had attended workshop-participation retreats within the last 5 years. Information regarding these variables is provided through descriptive statistics. Participants were recruited by mail from a mailing list provided by the program coordinators of the Preparación de Novios



weekend workshop. A brief description of the study was provided to all potential participants.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Affective communication:* Affective communication is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which evaluates a person's dissatisfaction with the degree of affection and understanding expressed by the partner (Snyder, 2004).

*Aggression:* Aggression is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which measures the level of intimidation and physical aggression that the respondent reports to experience from the partner (Snyder, 2004).

*Anxiety:* Anxiety is one of the five global factors of the 16PF that measures the level of emotional stability, vigilance, apprehension, and tension in the respondent (Cattell et al., 2009).

*Bowen's family systems theory (FST):* Bowen's FST explains the complex interactions through the use of a system (Papero, 1990).

*Disagreement about finances:* Disagreement about finances is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which measures discord in the relationship regarding financial management (Snyder, 2004).

*Extraversion:* Extraversion is one of the five global factors of the 16PF that measures the level of warmth, liveliness, social boldness, privateness, and self-reliance of the respondents (Cattell et al., 2009).

*Family:* Family, according to Bowen's family system theory, an emotional unit that reacts to each other's needs, expectations, and distress (Papero, 1990).

*Family history of distress:* Family history of distress is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which reflects relationship disruptions within the respondent's family of origin (Snyder, 2004).

*Global distress:* Global distress is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which evaluates the overall dissatisfaction with the relationship (Snyder, 2004).

*Independence:* Independence is one of the five global factors of the 16PF that measures the level of dominance, social boldness, vigilance, and openness to change in respondents (Cattell et al., 2009).

*Marital satisfaction:* Marital satisfaction is a spouse's perception of the degree to which the partner meets his or her desires and needs (Peleg, 2008).

*Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised (MSI-R):* The MSI-R is a self-administered survey for measuring relationship satisfaction. It is composed of 150 true/false items or 129 items if the respondent does not have children. A total of 13 subscales assess the dimensions of a person's relationship (Herrington et al., 2008; Negy & Snyder, 1997).

*Problem-solving communication:* Problem-solving communication is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which assesses ineffectiveness in resolving differences within the relationship (Snyder, 2004).

*Relationship satisfaction:* Relationship satisfaction is a partner's perception of the degree to which the significant other meets his or her desires and needs, based on self-report measures (Peleg, 2008).

*Role orientation:* Role orientation is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which evaluates the respondent's orientation toward traditional versus nontraditional relationships (Snyder, 2004).

*Self-control:* Self-control is one of the five global factors of the 16PF that measures the level of liveliness, rule-consciousness, abstractedness, and perfectionism in respondents (Cattell et al., 2009).

*Sexual dissatisfaction:* Sexual dissatisfaction is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which assesses dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of sexual activities (Snyder, 2004).

*Systems:* Systems, according to Bowen's FST, are varying numbers of members who interact in multiple ways with different purposes (Papero, 1990).

*Time together:* Time together is one of the 13 scales of the MSI-R, which evaluates companionship and the time shared in leisure activities (Snyder, 2004).

*Tough-mindedness:* Tough-mindedness is one of the five global factors of the 16PF that measures the level of warmth, sensitivity, abstractedness and openness to change in respondents (Cattell et al., 2009).

*16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; 16PF):* The 16PF questionnaire is a measure of various personality characteristics (Cattell et al., 2009).

### **Assumptions**

The study was based on the following five assumptions:

First, the MSI-R is a psychometrically sound assessment tool for evaluating the respondents' perceived marital satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation,

problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. Previous research has shown the MSI-R to be a psychometrically sound instrument (Herrington et al., 2008; Negy & Snyder, 1997; Snyder, 2004).

Second, the 16PF is a psychometrically sound assessment tool for evaluating the respondents' personality characteristics. Previous research has shown the 16PF to be a psychometrically sound instrument (Cattell et al., 2009; Irwing, Booth, & Batey, 2014).

Third, it was assumed that the assessment tools used were appropriate for the recruited sample. It also was assumed that participants were able to understand the questions on the 16PF, the MSI-R, and the demographics survey and that they answered accurately, candidly, and honestly to the best of their knowledge and personal judgment.

Fourth, it was assumed that the overall level of marital satisfaction perceived by a couple could be attributed to many different factors.

Fifth, it was assumed that the assessed personality characteristics accurately represented the participants.

These assumptions were necessary in the context of the study in order to move forward in discovering if connections existed between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction for adults who attend premarital education programs.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Areas of the research problem addressed in this study included determining a relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults. This involved breaking the question down for a more detailed understanding of how and

whether relationships existed between personality characteristics and affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction in adults who had attended a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. These areas were chosen because a review of the literature revealed a gap in the available information regarding personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended a premarital education program.

Participation in this research was limited to adults who had attended a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. Notably, adults who had not attended a premarital education program or adults who had attended alternate premarital education programs were not included in the sample. Generalizations of the results to persons who have attended other premarital education programs or no such programs or who are not of Hispanic descent should, therefore, be made with caution.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations are recognized for this study. First, to participate in this study, individuals had to agree independently to complete the questionnaire and survey and return it to me, the researcher. Second, because the 16PF and MSI-R are self-report inventories, some social-desirability bias may have been present in the answers. As the researcher, I cannot vouch for the participants' complete candor and truthfulness in their responses. Third, the sample was drawn from participants in a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years, who were also aware that they would receive a \$25 gift certificate for their participation. It is possible that this might have affected the

complete truthfulness of their responses. Fourth, the population size was rather small, which made it difficult quickly to recruit an adequate sample. Fifth, no control group was established for this nonexperimental study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This quantitative study provided information about the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction of individuals who have attended a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. By examining how different variables were affected, this study provided a better overall understanding of the impact personality characteristics appeared to have on relationship satisfaction of adults who had attended this marital education program. It also showed whether these effects were a durable improvement. This information is important because individuals who feel gratified in their relationship tend to report less stress, anxiety, and depression as well as increased life satisfaction and well-being (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011). Distressed relationships have a large impact on physical and mental health. Distress and conflict in a relationship have been linked to decreased immune-system functioning and the development of subsequent adult psychological disorders (Doss, Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2009; Markman et al., 2013; Wong, 2009).

Additionally, individuals who experienced parental divorce as children appeared to have an increased risk of a variety of problems in adulthood. Adults with divorced parents tended to have more troubled marriages, experienced weak ties with their parents, obtained less education and earn less income, and reported increased psychological distress (Amato & Cheadle, 2005). Some researchers even suggested that a grandparent's

decision to divorce might affect offspring two generations later. Thus, a grandparent's divorce is often a predictor of less education, marital discord, and weaker parental ties for future generations (Amato & Cheadle, 2005).

A large body of research suggested that children thrive when they reside with their biological parents or adoptive parents, as compared to children in other living environments (Acs, 2007; Love & Murdock, 2004). Children of divorced parents appear to be affected across various domains that include school difficulties, externalizing behaviors, depressed moods, low self-esteem, distress, and poor social competence (Cummings & Davies, 2002; D'Onofrio et al., 2005). Parental conflict experienced by children also threatens the child's emotional security and increases the risk for social and psychological disorders (Doss et al., 2009; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Wong, 2009).

Overall, a community benefits when its members are satisfied in their relationships. Partners who live together may influence not only each other's moods but also the behavioral and psychological well-being (Saxbe & Repett, 2010). Persons with satisfied relationships are less likely to be ill and more likely to have improved work productivity. Improved work productivity for the most part provides some form of financial stability, improving a person's economic situation (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Those who feel economic pressure have a tendency for increased emotional distress (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Persons in satisfied relationships may create an increasingly positive and stable atmosphere for children, thereby reducing abusive and destructive situations (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Furthermore, the likelihood that those children will need state intervention or have school incidents or involvement with law enforcement is

reduced (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Children in homes of persons satisfied with their relationships have an increased chance to grow into well-rounded adults who will be able to engage in positive relationships of their own (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Therefore, premarital education programs may assist couples with their decision to marry and, in some instances, prevent future divorces by helping couples to see if they should not marry. Premarital programs also teach effective communication techniques and problem-solving skills, as well as coping with relationship difficulties. Last, premarital programs are designed to enable individuals to seek assistance when they need help dealing with future relationship difficulties (Doss et al., 2009; Fawcett et al., 2010; Markman et al., 2013; Wong, 2009).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the problem statement, purpose of the study, independent and dependent variables, and the research questions and hypotheses. I also discussed the significance of the study and the theoretical framework based Bowen's FST (Papero, 1990). I explained the nature of the study and provided definitions of key terms as well as a review of the assumptions and limitations that apply in the study.

In Chapter 2, I describe the evolution of the FST and provide a review of the literature with a focus on studies that used and validated the 16PF and MSI-R and explored personality characteristics, relationship satisfaction, and relationship education. In Chapter 3, I present the research methods used in this nonexperimental quantitative study, including research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and



data collection and data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and measures taken for the protection of the participants' rights and anonymity.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

A review of the literature produced a limited number of studies on the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended a premarital education program (Baucom et al., 2011; Gattis et al., 2004). The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to close this gap in the professional literature by examining the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The focus was on the influence of personality characteristics, time since attendance of the program, gender, ethnicity, and age as the independent variables, and on relationship satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction as dependent variables.

High quality of intimate relationships has been linked to greater life satisfaction and lower rates of depression (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). Positive and stable relationships have also been shown to reduce stress and anxiety and to allow those in the relationship to feel happy and content (Schudlich et al., 2011). Several researchers examining premarital education reported a correlation between lower divorce rates and higher levels of marital quality for those who had participated in premarital education programs (Fawcett et al., 2010). However, little research has been conducted on the impact of premarital weekend workshops conducted in the Southwestern United States, and more specifically on the Preparación de Novios program (Baucom et al., 2011; Bodenmann et

al., 2009). The literature search produced no studies on the effect personality may or may not have on relationship satisfaction for persons who have attended premarital education workshops. Neither were studies available on premarital education workshops conducted with a minority population within the 5-year time frame. Information on the impact of premarital educational workshops with a variety of populations is highly desirable, especially with a long-range view, to determine if the positive effects last beyond the first 2 or 3 years of marriage. It is important to note if personality characteristics play a role in producing a positive or negative effect with respect to relationship satisfaction in various populations.

This chapter contains a review of the literature on personality characteristics as related to marital satisfaction, marital and relationship satisfaction, premarital education, as well as the FST and its evolution. Next, I provide a review of studies that used the 16PF to obtain personality characteristics measures and their relationship to marital satisfaction and the MSI-R to obtain relationship satisfaction measures. I also review studies on education and counseling. Then, I discuss variables of mental and behavioral health and provide an explanation for the behavioral implications of personality characteristics and relationship education for relationship satisfaction. The chapter concludes with a rationale for the choice of research method, a summary of the literature reviewed, and suggestions for additional research needed.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I obtained articles, books, and book chapters with relevance for the study through online library databases. The database search included Academic Search Premier

PsychINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX with Full Text, ERIC, and Mental Measurements Yearbook, in addition to websites related to mental health. The literature search included seminal texts obtained through library searches and from retailers. Key search terms included *marital satisfaction, marital characteristics, premarital counseling, marriage counseling, marital preparation, marital therapy, impact on engaged couples, cohabitation, the impact of PREPARE on engaged couples, marital education, marital enrichment programs, relationship enrichment programs, premarital enrichment programs, premarital training, premarital counseling, evaluating effectiveness of premarital education, relationship education programs, premarital relationship enhancement, betrothal, the value of premarital education, marital and relationship happiness, dissolution, dissatisfaction, divorce, dissolution of marriage, screening for marital discord, marital satisfaction inventories, relationship satisfaction inventories, Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised, systems theory, family systems theory, 16PF, 16 personality factor questionnaire, personality as related to marital satisfaction, and impact of personality on long term relationships*. The publication time frame for the literature search was 2010 to 2014. Some older works were included because of their relevance for providing the background of the topic of marital and relationship satisfaction, premarital education, and instrument development. Their use also introduced the reader to historically prominent theoretical works in this area of psychology.

## FST

The theoretical framework for exploring the differences in relationship satisfaction measures was Bowen's FST (Papero, 1990). FST illustrates complex interactions of individual components that, together, form a system. According to FST, systems may contain varying numbers of members who interact in multiple ways and with different purposes and varying degrees of interdependence. Notably, the family is viewed as an emotional unit in which the members reacts to each other's needs, expectations, and distress. It is the emotional interdependence that presumably evolved to help family members be cohesive and to cooperate with each other in terms of establishing protection, shelter, and food (Papero, 1990). In these complex family systems, society is viewed as the environment, and individuals within the family system form a specific element not only within their own family unit but also within the environment as a whole (DeBruyn, 2005; Papero, 1990; Rabstejnek, 2012).

In 1968, Bertalanffy presented the foundation and development of the general systems theory. His work reflected interactions of complex systems with many units that could then be characterized by a set of values, which could change over time (Gottman, Swanson, & Swanson, 2002). The core of the systems model maintains that there exists a circular movement of parts that are affected by each other and may, therefore, be activated at any number of points by either system members or forces on the outside of the system (Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978).

General systems theory holds that every living organism is an open system that strives toward wholeness (von Bertalanffy, 1968). General systems theory (a) aims at

integration of various sciences that are both natural and social; (b) maintains that such integrations are central; (c) holds that it is an important means of arriving at the exact theory in the nonphysical field of science; (d) tries to develop unifying principles across sciences, bringing closer a unity of science; and (e) may lead to an integration of scientific education (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Hence, general systems theory holds that human beings are not passive receivers of stimuli but rather create their universe (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

A natural progression of the systems model led to the evolution of FST through the late 1940s. After World War II, therapists began to explore family dynamics, particularly for veterans returning to their families (Rabstejnek, 2012). They questioned why some veterans readjusted to society in the presence of their family, while others remained very ill. This was a very different and new approach to a better understanding of psychopathology (Rabstejnek, 2012). As a result, some therapists began to see the root of individual problems in a dysfunctional family system (Rabstejnek, 2012). When therapists began to understand how the emotional system operated in their client's family, work, and social systems, new and more effective problem solving was revealed (Papero, 1990).

Key concepts of FST include (a) a multigenerational transmission process, (b) a family projection process, (c) a nuclear-family emotional system, (d) triangles, (e) differentiation of self, (f) a societal emotional process, (g) emotional cutoff, and (h) sibling position (Papero, 1990; Rabstejnek, 2012).

### **Multigenerational Transmission Process**

The primary concept of the multigenerational transmission process is that differentiation between parents and children leads to marked differences within multigenerational families (Papero, 1990). The transmission occurs through both conscious teaching and unconscious programming of behaviors and emotional reactions that interact to shape the individual. Most often, people choose partners whose levels of differentiation of self are similar to their own (Papero, 1990). The level of differentiation of self can affect multiple areas in a person's life, including health, longevity, marital stability, reproduction, accomplishments in school, and occupational success (Papero, 1990). Those who demonstrate high differentiation most often have stable nuclear families and contribute extensively to society. Poorly differentiated people tend to have chaotic personal lives and are highly dependent on others to sustain them (Papero, 1990). Multigenerational transmission, therefore, affects not only the level of self that people develop but also how they interact with others (Papero, 1990).

### **Family Projection Process**

The family projection process is the manner in which emotional problems are transmitted to children (Papero, 1990). Children inherit strengths and problems through their relationship with their parents. However, problems that most affect children in the long run are heightened needs for attention and approval, difficulty dealing with expectations, a tendency to blame, feeling responsible for the happiness of others, impulsivity to relieve anxiety of the moment rather than acting thoughtfully and

tolerating anxiety. These types of sensitivities can escalate chronic anxiety in relationships (Papero, 1990).

### **Nuclear Family Emotional System**

The nuclear family emotional system has four basic relationship patterns that are indicative of where family problems develop. The first, marital conflict, suggests that increased tension in the family occurs when both partners focus on what is wrong with their spouse; each tries to control the other, and each becomes resistant to the other's efforts to control him or her (Papero, 1990). The second pattern, dysfunction in one spouse, suggests that one partner pressures the other to act and think in the way they want and their partner yields to the pressure. In this pattern both of the partners attempt to accommodate in order to preserve harmony but one of the partners does more of it (Papero, 1990). The third pattern, impairment of one or more children, suggests that parents worry excessively over one or more of their children and have an idealized or negative view of them. This pattern makes the child vulnerable to either act out or internalize tensions in the family (Papero, 1990). The last pattern, emotional distance, suggests that, in order to reduce the intensity of the relationship, people distance themselves from each other and increase the risk of isolation. Notably, the more anxiety one person absorbs, the less other people must absorb in the relationship (Papero, 1990).

### **Triangle**

A triangle is a three-person relationship system that represents the smallest stable relationship system (Papero, 1990). Tension in the triangle can shift around the three relationships and thereby stabilize the system; however, nothing gets resolved. The



triangle can create an odd-man-out sensation, which can be very difficult for individuals to tolerate (Papero, 1990). Someone is usually uncomfortable in the relationship and pushes either to remain as the insider or to move from being an outsider to an insider. Notably, this type of pushing in the relationship may contribute to clinical problems such as depression and even physical illness (Papero, 1990).

### **Differentiation of Self**

The differentiation of self suggests that actions and emotions are impacted differently by a poorly defined versus a well-defined differentiation of self. Persons with poorly developed differentiation of self are highly impacted by others (Papero, 1990). They depend heavily on the approval of and acceptance by others and adjust their behaviors to please, or they pressure others to conform to what they believe others should be like. Persons with a well-differentiated self have a more realistic dependence on others and can remain calm and clear-headed when there is conflict (Papero, 1990). Everyone has problems in their personal life and at work. Less differentiated people and their family units are at higher risk for periods of heightened chronic anxiety that contributes to a higher share of society's most serious problems (Papero, 1990).

### **Societal Emotional Process**

The societal emotional process describes how societal periods of either progressive or regressive levels are governed by emotional systems. During a regression period, people are less likely to view a long-term solution and act to relieve the anxiety felt at the moment (Papero, 1990). In essence, societal regression includes growth in crime and violence, increased divorce rate, increased litigation, greater separation

between racial groups, less principled decision making by the leaders, epidemic of drugs, increase in bankruptcy, and more focus on rights rather than on responsibilities (Papero, 1990).

### **Emotional Cutoff**

Emotional cutoff involves managing unresolved emotional issues with family members by cutting off emotional contact with those individuals (Papero, 1990). A risk of emotional cutoff is that individuals may try to build a substitute family with social and work relationships. Although everyone has unresolved attachment to their original family, those who are well-differentiated have much more resolution than those who are not (Papero, 1990).

### **Sibling Position**

The position of children in the family with respect to their siblings impacts their development and behavior differently (Papero, 1990; Rabstejnek, 2012). Sibling position suggests that people who grow up in the same sibling position often have important common characteristics and that spouses' sibling positions often affect their romantic relationship. Notably, children are also affected by their parents' sibling position because it may affect how they parent each of their children (Papero, 1990; Rabstejnek, 2012).

### **Research Based on FST**

In past decades, the FST has ignited a desire to look beyond the individual to broader influences and their functionality in the face of the individual's problems, distress, fear, and illness, as well as in positive situations. Increasingly, therapists have turned to the FST to understand how adults initiate, create, and maintain intimate

relationships in an effort to enhance treatment options (Skowron, 2000). Some researchers and therapists used the FST in addition to other fundamental theories such as attachment theory further to explain and develop treatment for individuals (Kozłowska & Hanney, 2002). In particular, the Bowen theory is considered to be a comprehensive explanation of both development and maintenance of intimate relationships, and, as such, it has influenced much psychotherapy work (Mones & Schwartz, 2007; Skowron, 2000). Other scientific fields are also looking toward the FST as a useful theoretical framework through which the effects of illnesses or the development and genetics of individuals and their families might be better understood (O'Connor, 2006; Yi, 2009).

Therapy using the FST model is a structured therapy session and not technique focused. The goal in treatment is to help families move toward greater levels of differentiation (Brown, 1999). The first stage is to reduce anxiety in clients and to help them learn how their symptom is part of their relating pattern (Brown, 1999). The second stage focuses on self-issues to help clients increase their levels of differentiation and to resist the pull of family influence (Brown, 1999). The third stage is ongoing, and shows clients' ways of differentiating themselves from the family of origin with the hope of decreasing anxiety and increasing self-responsibility within the nuclear family (Brown, 1999).

Notably, therapists are cautioned to connect with families without becoming emotionally reactive and to avoid triangles that the family may want to create with the therapist (Brown, 1999). Also, to reduce the opportunity for parents to use their children

as the “triangle person,” the participation of children in treatment is minimized (Brown, 1999).

### **Importance of FST for This Study**

The FST helped to guide this research study by providing a basic explanation for individual processes of emotional stimuli and the obtained information and experiences from a systems perspective. It facilitated the understanding of links that the participants maintained to their social and physical environment and the multiple environments and contexts that influence individual levels of marital satisfaction (Magnavita, 2012; Wong, 2009). It also helped to elucidate personality adaptation to environmental and relationship demands. In turn, this deeper understanding helped to assess how individual processes and the personality’s adaptation to these processes impact intimate relationships, particularly through third-party intervention such as the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop (Magnavita, 2012; Wong, 2009).

I chose the FST as the conceptual framework because it provided the best explanation of the impact parents have on their children, the effect of parental transmission on the children’s emotional system and levels of differentiation, and the impact of these results on the eventual romantic and work relationships of the children (Brown, 1999; Pesonen, Raikkonen, Heinonen, Jarvenpaa, & Strandberg, 2006). Finally, the FST showed how those relationships impact societal interactions. The FST allows one to see a person more comprehensively; it facilitates one’s understanding of the person as a whole. It provides a basic understanding not only of how individuals with varied personalities react to emotional and physical interactions but also of how others’

reactions affect the individual (Brown, 1999; Pesonen, Raikkonen, Heinonen, Jarvenpaa, & Strandberg, 2006). The Preparación de Novios weekend workshop provided a venue for couples to explore what each member of the couple brought to the relationship, and it gave them a better understanding of and appreciation for the new system they were creating. Aspects of the eight interlocking concepts—multigenerational transmission process, family projection process, nuclear-family emotional system, triangles, differentiation of self, societal emotional process, emotional cutoff, and sibling position (Papero, 1990; Rabstejnek, 2012)—were addressed throughout the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, the MSI-R, and the 16PF.

Looking for long-term trends in the relationship between personality and the relationships of those who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the past five years may build upon the present theory by examining the role an external intervention has on each partner and the relationship and in turn, the societal impact each partner has contributed as well as how their own personality characteristic affects these trends.

### **16PF**

Screening for personality characteristics is the primary purpose of the 16PF (Institute for Personality Ability Testing [IPAT], 2009). The 16PF appears to be suitable for persons of different ethnicities, age, and gender. Irwing, Booth, and Batey (2014) found that, when compared to other major personality inventories, the 16PF possessed good psychometric properties.

The 16PF has been translated into several languages, including Spanish. A study by Ellis and Mead (2000) showed internal consistency of the 16PF's Spanish version throughout most of the scales; the researchers considered it, therefore, to be a good objective measure. However, the primary reliability studies were conducted in Latin America. This should be taken into consideration because the Latin American norms showed higher scores when compared to U.S. norms on scales that measured sensitivity, insecurity, and controlled behavior, and it showed lower scores on impulsivity (Whitworth & Perry, 1990).

The 16PF was used in earlier studies, in which the researchers wanted to gain a better understanding of the role personality characteristics played in relationship satisfaction. The authors reported that the 16PF was a useful tool with couples classified as either stable or unstable (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967; Kim, Martin, & Martin, 1989; Meck & Leunes, 1977). These studies used the 16PF as their primary tool. Such studies were few and found through the literature search, which was focused on both personality characteristics as outlined by the 16PF and relationship satisfaction. However, no other studies were found that used the 16PF in conjunction with the MSI-R and premarital workshop attendees to explore aspects of the FST.

### **MSI-R**

Screening for the nature and extent of marital and relationship satisfaction or distress is the primary purpose of the MSI-R instrument (Negy & Snyder, 1997; Snyder, 2004; Snyder, Wills, & Keiser, 1981). The MSI-R is equally applicable to heterosexual married couples, gay and lesbian couples, and unmarried couples. Previous studies have

demonstrated that the MSI-R retains a high level of internal consistency regardless of the couple type (Means-Christensen, Snyder, & Negy, 2003). Herrington et al. (2008) found that the use of alternative couple distress measures, suitable language for unmarried couples, and multidimensional relationship functioning scores were advantages of the MSI-R.

The MSI-R has been translated into several languages, including Spanish. Because I used Spanish version of the instrument in this study, it was important to that Negy and Snyder (1997, 2000) had found internal consistency for most of the scales of the MSI-R Spanish version and stated, therefore, that it was a good objective measure for a person's perception of relationship satisfaction. However, two of the subscales—Dissatisfaction With Children and Conflict Over Child Rearing—appeared to have weaker internal consistency and the results should, therefore, be used with caution. The weaker internal consistency was attributed to two possible issues: (a) level of acculturation of the participants and (b) Spanish dialect spoken by the participant.

In their study titled “Marital Satisfaction of Healthy Differentiated and Undifferentiated Couples,” Lim and Jennings (1996) used the MSI as a primary tool in conjunction with the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire and found that the MSI was useful in their study and helped them to see the impact of differentiation on marital satisfaction. This was one of the few studies found through an extensive search of the literature that explored the concept of differentiation of self, which is an aspect of FST, in conjunction with the MSI or MSI-R.

### **Personality Characteristics**

Each individual has a unique personality made up of any number of personality characteristics, or traits. How do these personality characteristics influence relationships with others? Are people attracted to each other by similarities in their relationships or by differences? To what extent do these personality characteristics influence the satisfaction in said relationships? These are all questions, which, for the most part, remain unanswered. Past studies found that personality characteristics are an important part of successful and satisfying relationships, but identification of a set group of characteristics that achieve satisfaction consistently across relationships remains to be determined (Caughlin et al., 2000; Gattis et al., 2004; Kim et al., 1989; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

The majority of studies that address personality characteristics and marital satisfaction have used the Big Five model of personality. The Big Five model assesses primarily personality dimensions that are broken down into five factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (Johnson & Ostendorf, 1993; O'Rourke et al., 2011). Although several of the studies found that neuroticism appeared problematic to marital satisfaction, the findings have been inconsistent (O'Rourke et al. 2011). Gattis, Berns, Simpson, and Christensen (2004) found that stable and happy relationships had greater interspousal similarities that may be tied to greater satisfaction in the relationship. However, they found only small effects to support that unhappiness might result from fundamental personality dimensions. Other studies found that complementary relationships, in which the personality characteristics



differed, had more balance that increased the levels of marital satisfaction (Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota, & Levenson, 2007). These studies found that, although personality characteristics showed no relationship to the initial level of marital satisfaction, those with greater personality similarities had negative slopes in marital satisfaction over time (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). In their study, Kilmann and Vendemia (2013) found that impulsivity, insensitivity, and self-centeredness predicted a couple's average level of marital distress. They also found wide partner discrepancies on the characteristics of dominance, dependence, responsibility, and cooperation. Notably, they identified that the importance of personality characteristics changes over time and that the success of a marriage requires that both partners accommodate to mutually fulfill their needs. Other studies also found that couples had different focus points at different stages in their marriage. Marriage becomes more of a process where roles shift and change as both internal and external demands are made on the marriage (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). What may have been an important factor for marital satisfaction at the beginning of the relationship may dissipate over time (O'Rourke et al., 2011).

One study that used the 16PF as a primary instrument, instead of the Big Five, found that certain personality traits play an essential role in marital satisfaction. Persons in relationships with similar source traits that were not extreme reported more stable and satisfying marriages (Kim et al., 1989).. These traits included intelligence, guilt proneness, dominance, parmia, protension, ego strength, and self-concept control. Couples who appeared balanced in personality and abstract thinkers reported higher levels of satisfaction than those who were unsatisfied with their relationship (Kim et al.,

1989). Notably, persons whose traits also included being tender-minded, trusting of each other, accepting of others and enthusiastic reported greater marriage stability and satisfaction (Kim et al., 1989).

### **Relationship Satisfaction**

It could be said that relationship satisfaction is an enigma that varies greatly from person to person. What does it mean to be satisfied in a relationship? Who decides what a satisfying relationship should look like? Despite these questions, researchers have attempted to identify common constructs among individuals in order to provide a guide for healthy and satisfying relationships. Several constructs have been identified as significant contributors of relationship satisfaction. Such constructs include affective communication, gender role orientation, problem solving, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. While these constructs tend to impact relationship satisfaction in either a positive or negative way when viewed in isolation, their influence may vary when treated as a whole. The following sections provide a summary of each of the aforementioned constructs and their role in healthy, satisfying relationships.

#### **Affective Communication**

A strong association between marital communication and marital satisfaction was reported by Hess and Coffelt (2012), Rehman et al. (2011), Rehman and Holtzworth-Munroe (2007), Caughlin and Vangelisti (1999), and Burleson and Denton (1997). Dissatisfied marital relationships were often marked by demand/withdrawal patterns of conflict when one partner became more demanding as the other partner withdrew

(Caughlin & Vangelisti, 1999). Negative affect such as contempt or disgust seemed to predict future episodes of marital distress and negative affect reciprocity (Gardner & Wampler, 2008).

By contrast, satisfied marital relationships showed patterns of ability or capacity effectively to communicate goals and feelings during the course of an interaction (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Emotional skills such as being able to identify and express emotions and empathy and manage challenges contributed greatly to a healthy marriage (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005). Communicating emotions effectively provides moments that allow for vulnerability in a person's behavior, which may precipitate intimate moments or events. Notably, one may assume that effective communication involves positive and nonhostile negative emotions, but would not include hostile negative emotions (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005).

Part of the difference between dissatisfied and satisfied relationships can be attributed to a person's ability to adapt socially and acquire various interpretive and symbolic resources of communication in order to obtain certain social outcomes (Burlison & Denton, 1997). Notably, people with different upbringing, cultures, or beliefs may interpret words, actions, and meanings in different ways, as well as identify marital satisfaction through different terms. The Rehman and Holtzworth-Munroe (2007) study provided a pertinent example; it showed that people in the United States placed great emphasis on intimacy and closeness and the idea of romantic love, as opposed to other groups outside the USA. Notably, people who entered relationships with such divergent belief systems seemed to find it more difficult to obtain satisfaction in their

relationships. However, marital satisfaction can be seen not only as a function of the partners' intrinsic values, but also as a function of the extent to which they similarly rank their individual intrinsic values (Luo et al., 2008). Overall, positive and negative communication styles were highly correlated with levels of marital satisfaction for people from both within and without the United States, suggesting that communication skills play an important role in healthy relationships (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007).

### **Gender Role Orientation**

One construct of relationship satisfaction that has been demonstrated to influence occupational, peer, and parent-child relationships and is clearly evident and influential within the marital context, is a person's belief and expectation regarding gender roles (Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2011). In the United States, gender role expectations have drastically changed over the last 100 years. While clearly not all Americans share or value the same beliefs, some intrinsic changes seem to affect traditionally minded as well as liberally minded persons. Traditionally minded persons could be described as being more rigid, avoidant of direct confrontation, and deriving many of their attitudes from external sources (Schwarzwald, Koslowsky, & Izhak-Nir, 2008). Liberally minded persons are characterized by more flexible social norms, willingness to confront conflict head-on, and generally developing their attitudes through negotiations within the family structure (Schwarzwald, Koslowsky, & Izhak-Nir, 2008).

One of the primary changes has been that women as a whole have become more economically independent and less dependent on men for financial stability. Over time,

gender differences have diminished so that women's profiles have shifted closer to those of men (Schwarzwald et al., 2008). Nonetheless, women in relationships often find that they have to play multiple roles such as wife, partner, parent, and employee or employer and assume responsibility for the household as well (Galanakis et al., 2009; Pedersen, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2011). Although the liberalization of gender ideologies has increased, women in dual-earner households remain largely responsible for domestic chores and often struggle to find balance between work and family. The domains of work and marriage are very often in conflict with each other and experienced as such (Steenbergen et al., 2011). If the demands of work make it difficult for a partner to meet the needs of the family, marital outcomes are most likely to be negative and accompanied by increased stress levels (Galanakis et al., 2009). Domestic or family work remains central to family functioning and carries with it not only gendered meaning but also perceptions of marital quality. Both men and women differ not only in how they define family work but also in how marital satisfaction is achieved (Pedersen et al., 2011). In some instances, women reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction if their partners verbally expressed gratitude for their work contributions in the labor force and at home, which also influenced the women's perception of fairness regarding the division of labor in the home (Lambert & Fincham, 2011).

However, some researchers suggested that a woman's gender ideology helped to determine the impact on marital quality (Minnotte et al., 2010). Couples who reported similar gender ideologies, regardless of whether they were traditional or egalitarian, were more likely to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Minnotte et al., 2010).

Regardless of the couple's level of happiness, it appeared to be a function of who they were as individuals and how similar the partners were in their responses (Luo et al., 2008). In some instances, the difference in ideology did not diminish relationship satisfaction, as when a woman reported her ideology as traditional and her partner's as egalitarian; such couples, too, reported high levels of relationship satisfaction. Women reported the lowest level of relationship satisfaction when they felt strongly egalitarian, but had high demands and increased levels of stress placed upon them at work, while their partners held traditional ideologies (Minnotte et al., 2010).

Men reported the highest level of relationship satisfaction when women espoused the same ideology or when they held traditional values (Pedersen et al., 2011). Men who reported a traditional ideology often had difficulty dealing with high demands of a wife's job; they tended to express the view that the job was taking away from the wife's child-rearing and household responsibilities (Pedersen et al., 2011). Because of the enduring idea that domestic work is women's work, women still seemed to have difficulty with compelling men to take up increased domestic responsibilities as the women entered the paid-labor market. For many men, domestic labor remains a critical marker between what it means to be a man or a woman (Pedersen et al., 2011). By contrast, men who reported an egalitarian ideology were not as affected by the demands of their wife's job and viewed the second income as either a necessity or a favorable situation for their household. They were more likely than men with a traditional ideology to help with some household chores and child-rearing responsibilities (Minnotte et al., 2010).

A second significant change occurred in the institution of marriage. Commitment had long been viewed as a desire to remain indefinitely in a relationship, and, historically, people remained in a relationship for three primary reasons: (a) they wanted to do so, (b) they felt they ought to, and (c) they perceived that they had to (Weigel, Bennett, & Ballard-Reisch, 2006). Fewer people today view commitment as indefinite, and may remain in a relationship only if that is what they want to do, as opposed to what they feel they ought to or had to do. Marriage is no longer the only manner for relationships to flourish into family units (Weigel, Bennett, & Ballard-Reisch, 2006). Many people no longer view marriage as a predecessor to living together with their partners. Premarital cohabitation has become widely accepted as an alternative to marriage, and in some instances family and friends encourage it. Traditionally, a high percentage of couples that married did so through a religious institution (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Today, a considerable number of people who do marry, do so outside a church and with less religious significance. In addition, because the stigma associated with divorce has diminished, second and third marriages are becoming increasingly common (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). People who have experienced one or more divorces may exhibit a change in gender role beliefs and traditions as well. Many report a decline in traditional gender-role attitudes and behaviors and an increase in egalitarian attitudes and behaviors (Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2011).

Child rearing in general has seen structural changes in many families. Many women are opting to delay child bearing and, ultimately, have fewer children than was customary in the past (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Nonetheless, women tend to perform

the bulk of child care. For many women, the presence of children decreases the overall marital well-being and increases feelings of burnout, especially if they have a paid job outside the home. Any involvement by men in child care appears to increase the women's satisfaction (Pedersen et al., 2011; Steenbergen et al., 2011). Additionally, there have been increases in single parenthood, particularly for women. Many single parents, whether men or women, opt to remain single and raise the children on their own, in some cases with external support from friends or family (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Others, however, chose to establish commitments with others through romantic relationships or marriage. In these circumstances, it is not uncommon for couples to create new blended families (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). Often, one or both partners enter a marriage or romantic relationship with children from past relationships or marriages (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001).

The public recognition of same-sex couples has also created an intrinsic change. Many people in same-sex relationships have demanded that society acknowledge their relationship (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001). They have fought for spousal entitlements and public ceremonies, announcing their intentions of commitment and monogamy toward their partner, as well as basic rights and acceptance (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001).

Gender-role beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors can vary significantly among people. However, relationships in which both partners share similar beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors regarding gender roles, tend to be characterized by higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Minnotte et al., 2010). Notably, traditional partners expressed increased



dissatisfaction when the other partner's behavior differed from what they perceived as acceptable social norms (Schwarzwald et al., 2008).

### **Problem Solving**

Problems will arise in all situations and within most relationships. They may be large or small and remain issues for many years, or they could be resolved in a few minutes. Problems do not discriminate by age, gender, nationality, or socioeconomic status; they confront all people in one way or another. The distinguishing factor is in how people resolve or attempt to resolve the problems they encounter and whether they recognize that conflict management can be a complicated process with considerable impact on both the course and state of relationships. Most couples resolve most of their problems and conflicts that have little impact upon their lives on an ongoing basis, whereas other more devastating relationship conflicts can leave lasting emotional scars, which often impede relationship functioning (Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon, & Litzinger, 2009; Mitnick, Heyman, Malik, & Smith-Slep, 2009).

Characteristics and traits that each person brings to a relationship can have a profound impact on the success or failure of said relationship (Hanzal & Segrin, 2009). Problem solving in a relationship may cause additional stress, conflict, or dissatisfaction if one partner's style of handling conflict is incompatible with that of the other. Most individuals enter relationships with conflict resolution styles they have learned in their families of origin; these styles reflect both social and cultural variables to which they were exposed. Those whose styles involve negativity, demand/withdrawal patterns, competitiveness, and conflict avoidance were most often associated with lower levels of

relationship satisfaction and depression (Mitnick et al., 2009; Schudlich et al., 2011; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin, Hanzal, & Domschke, 2009). Higher relationship satisfaction was associated with those whose conflict-resolution styles were positively toned and constructive. These problem-solving patterns seemed to play an important role in predicting relationship satisfaction and, ultimately, in the success or failure of the relationship itself (Schudlich et al., 2011; Segrin et al., 2009).

It is important to note, however, that in some circumstances negative behavior was associated with long-term marital satisfaction, if the negative behavior was used as a tool to motivate change in the relationship and if it was behavior focused rather than character focused (McNulty & Russell, 2010). Notably, negative behavior as a relationship-improvement tool appeared to be implemented only when there were severe problems such as substance abuse by one partner and change was critically necessary (McNulty & Russell, 2010). Under these circumstances, when a direct negative tactic such as blame, command, or rejection was implemented, effective resolution of the problem seemed to occur slowly over time. Presumably, the direct tactic was effective because it provided a clear understanding of the problem and the changes required to resolve the problem (McNulty & Russell, 2010). Indirect negative tactics such as avoidance, insinuation, and presumption proved to be ineffective, presumably because they tended to be vague and ambiguous and did not clearly define either the problem or its solution (McNulty & Russell, 2010).

How couples argue and disagree on issues appeared to exert a considerable influence on the success of their relationship, more so even than the frequency or topic of

the argument. The conflicts in themselves did not necessarily hurt the relationship; it was rather more important how a couple dealt with interactions and behavior exchanges that influenced the quality of the relationship (Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin et al., 2009). Often, persons who engaged in intimate conflict interpreted an interaction in a profoundly different manner than their partners. Notably, men and women differed in their conflict-style tendencies and perception of how their own relationship satisfaction was affected by the partner's conflict-management style (Segrin et al., 2009). Relationships are inherently interdependent, and partners regularly influence how the other thinks, feels, and behaves. It is no wonder, noted Hanzal and Segrin (2009), that conflict-resolution styles, reciprocation of positive and negative affect, and supportiveness would influence relationship satisfaction and success.

### **Aggression and History of Distress**

Most people enter relationships expecting a rewarding experience that will be reciprocated. However, all relationships tend to experience a certain amount of conflict, often initiated when one partner feels that the other is provoking him or her. The idea of conflict is often unanticipated by those engaging in romantic relationships (Rhoades, Stanley, Kelmer, & Markman, 2010; Slotter et al., 2012). Inevitably, conflict and provocation are part of romantic relationships, which urge some individuals toward retaliation and, in some instances, aggressive retaliation (Gordon et al., 2009; Slotter et al., 2012). For the most part, couples resolve conflicts continuously with little emotional grief, trauma, or negative impact on the relationship. However, some conflicts can be

devastating for the relationship, leave lasting emotional scars, and disrupt the psychological closeness of the partners (Gordon et al., 2009; Slotter et al., 2012).

Individuals with a history of aggression and violence in their families of origin appeared to be at higher risk for aggression and violence in their own romantic relationships (Durtschi, Durtschi, Donnellan, Lorenz, & Conger, 2010; Timmons-Fritz, Smith-Slep, & O'Leary, 2012). Children whose parents behaved aggressively toward them and each other appeared to be most at risk to exhibit aggressive behavior themselves toward their romantic partners and to their own children. Parental behavior toward their children appeared to cause these children to imitate the aggressive behavior more so than witnessing interparental conflict alone (Durtschi, et al., 2010; Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012). Notably, witnessing and experiencing aggression and violence in the family of origin greatly increased the risk of imitation and tolerance of aggressive behavior (Durtschi, et al., 2010; Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012).

Mothers typically played an influential role in the lives of their children and represented the primary attachment figure who shaped interpersonal development and conflict-resolution skills (Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012). Children, who experienced mother-to-child aggression instead of safety and nurturance, were likely to perpetrate interpersonal aggression in their romantic relationships. On the other hand, children who experienced father-to-child aggression were at higher risk for suffering victimization (Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012). Men who had experienced severe physical aggression in the father-to-child relationship were likely to engage in both physical and psychological

abuse of their partners and, in some instances, to be victimized as well (Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012).

It is not surprising that physical aggression in couples is associated with low relationship satisfaction, high instability within the relationship, and eventual separation (Shortt, Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2006). Of new marriages that involved aggression, approximately 70% were dissatisfied, separated, or divorced after only 4 years as compared to only 38% of nonaggressive marriages. Cohabiting couples, whose relationships were aggressive in nature, experienced a dissolution rate of 49% within the first 5 years (Shortt, Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2006). Although aggression in a relationship appeared to be a predictor of relationship termination, the reported experiences differed from couple to couple, when the relationship was terminated. Some individuals experienced negative interaction patterns early in their relationship, which were often absorbing for the couple (Gardner & Wampler, 2008; Rhoades et al., 2010; Shortt et al., 2006). This state of absorption appeared to be difficult to change or leave behind; it worked to erode the relationship over time (Gardner & Wampler, 2008; Rhoades et al., 2010; Shortt et al., 2006). Some people may have a history of aggression but no recent aggression; thus, they seemed to be holding conflicting views about staying in the relationship or ending it (Rhodes et al., 2010). Some of them appeared to feel trapped, while experiencing little commitment to the relationship. When a relationship is characterized by violence, it is not uncommon for individuals to feel lower levels of dedication to their partner and higher levels of constraint commitment (Rhodes et al., 2010).

Interaction patterns between partners also play a role in the stability of the relationship. Those who engage in destructive and negative interpartner interactions, characterized by anger, demand/withdrawal, grudge holding, and blaming, often have reduced social support, increased stress, and in some instances high levels of aggression (Gordon et al., 2009; Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2009; Mitnick et al., 2009). Not only do psychological and physical aggression lead to individual maladjustment, but they also are harmful to the relationship and often make a bad situation worse by leading to depression in one or both partners (Gordon et al., 2009; Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2009; Mitnick et al., 2009). Interactions that involve jealousy often leave couples in opposite corners: One partner may need more space, while the other is threatened by separateness. The jealous partner may demand explanations and may be sullen or aggressive in doing so, while the other may withdraw or exhibit a level of defiance (Scheinkman & Werneck, 2010). One partner's reactions may cause the jealous partner to be increasingly suspicious. This type of action-reaction pattern tends to lead partners toward increased disengagement and separation (Scheinkman & Werneck, 2010).

### **Time Together**

The amount of quality time a couple spends together may influence the level of reported marital satisfaction. Relationships are an integral part of being human. Interactions with others can be either reactive or responsive and affect both mental and physical health (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). Most adults coregulate with those to whom they are close, meaning that they engage in dynamic reciprocal interchanges across multiple biological systems, particularly where adults in romantic relationships are concerned

(Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). Partners who live together may influence each other's mood and behavior and physiological well-being. Couples that are less reactive to each other's negative moods or physiological stresses and have a greater ability to counteract stressful experiences and negative affect are more likely to enjoy much marital satisfaction (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010).

People in intimate relationships naturally experience other types of relationships with other people in their lives as well. Those relationships will also influence the level of satisfaction present (Giblin, 1995). For example, couples with high ritual meaning, who engage in healthy family rituals, are more likely to increase their reported level of marital satisfaction. Rituals such as family celebrations, family traditions, and family interactions can serve to buffer the effects of stress and pathology within families. On the other hand, if family rituals are negative, rigid, hollow, or oppressive, they may impact marital satisfaction and lead to increased toxicity, stress, pathology, and dissatisfaction (Giblin, 1995).

### **Disagreement About Finances**

Financial disputes between intimate partners often predict divorce and break-up of the relationship better than other areas of disagreement (Dew, 2011; Vogler, 2005). Financial disputes tend to be more contentious and may go unresolved for longer periods of time. Most people seek strong relationships with interdependence and may leave relationships with low benefits, high costs, or both. Often, if economic interdependence declines, couples may terminate the relationship, particularly if they are cohabitating (Dew, 2011). Gender, age, culture, and life circumstances influence how each partner

sees his or her financial role in the relationship and what each feels is an appropriate way to manage household monies (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). The different money management styles reflect, reinforce, and may also conceal power relationships between the partners (Vogler, Lyonette, & Wiggins, 2008).

Financial problem solving is often influenced by the spending and saving habits and the financial issues of the family of origin, and the financial management styles of each partner (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Differences in individual characteristics, history, culture, circumstances, and mood often result in different perceptions of the same situation. The differences in perception may, then, lead to diverse emotional and behavioral responses, which often do not correlate with those of the partner, creating increased financial strain and distress in the intimate relationship (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). It is not uncommon for one partner to feel an initial stress about finances and for the other partner to report some level of strain as a result. The strain may issue from the financial situation but may increase due to changes in the partner's moods and behaviors (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Many who face economic pressure, experience emotional distress that will result in increased hostility toward the partner and decreased behaviors that are warm and supportive. This type of negative interpersonal behavior often leads dissatisfaction and instability in the relationship (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Researchers found that, notably, financial decision making was the primary source of disagreement and conflict, particularly when one partner perceived inequality regarding the final say about a decision and his or her input on household expenditures (Vogler, 2005; Vogler et al., 2008).



Individuals will deal differently with changes in their financial situation or decision making and may engage in varying ways of coping. Some couples opt to consult with financial advisors and find ways to improve joint financial management (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Others will attempt problem-focused coping through which expenses are reviewed and a budget is developed (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Still others may engage in emotion-focused coping by venting to family or friends and seeking their emotional support (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). Persons with the belief that they can do something to change their financial circumstances will enhance their adjustment and appear to deal more efficiently. In some instances, the level of financial strain on the couple is reduced when at least one partner in the relationship helps the other to reduce the strain by taking over some of the tasks and providing willing support. When the support provided is not genuine but rather forced, the strain is more likely to increase (Falconier & Epstein, 2011). In order to improve the probability of solving financial problems as a couple, the partner needs to be seen as trustworthy, collaborative, and stable. When the partner is perceived as selfish, controlling, or impulsive, chances for the couple's financial problem solving are greatly reduced (Falconier & Epstein, 2011).

In recent years, it appeared that couples have been abandoning traditional roles of marriage in exchange for new roles that attempt to increase equality and maintain some level of individualization, including cohabitation, as a type of marriage foundation (Dew, 2011). Those who seek equality may opt to keep the income from their job either entirely or partially separate to maintain decision making over their income. In these relationships, couples may pool part of their income with their partner in order to pay for

household expenses or opt to divide the expenses so each partner pays different bills (Dew, 2011). Other couples may maintain a single economic unit and put all the money together. These households usually function under one of the following three styles: (a) the woman manages all the money and gives the man an allowance for his needs, (b) the man manages all the money and may or may not give the woman money for household expenses such as groceries, or (c) there is a joint system and all the money is spent as needed by both. Notably, regardless of the new financial management styles, financial inequalities and bargaining positions continue to be present within the majority of intimate relationships (Vogler et al., 2008)

### **Sexual Dissatisfaction**

Both men and women reported that, in romantic relationships, the greatest rewards came through intimacy and sexual gratification (Papp, Goeke-Morey, & Cummings, 2013). Several studies indicated that sexual satisfaction and frequency of sexual relations, along with the perception of the spouse's satisfaction with the quality and frequency of sexual intercourse, were positively associated with marital satisfaction (Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005). The link between marital and sexual satisfaction appeared most evident as marital satisfaction decreased resulting in or from sexual inactivity and separation (Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005). Interestingly, it was estimated that between 15% and 20% of married Americans engage in sexual intercourse less than once a month with their spouses (Hess & Coffelt, 2012). Additionally, marital sexuality was ranked as the subject most neglected in the literature (Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005).

Other studies found that up to 50% of couples demonstrated or reported extremely high rates of sexual dysfunction in their intimate relationships (Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005). Intimacy conflicts were reported to have enormous significance in relationship satisfaction, particularly when they are stemming from dysfunctional sexual behaviors and desires. Not only were intimacy conflicts problematic for couples, but they also had a tendency to be recurrent, requiring repeated attention and effort (Papp et al., 2013). Couples in distress reported less mutually constructive communication and increased demand/withdrawal communication. Additionally, they tended to avoid communication and had increased conflict or psychological distance (Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005).

Discussions regarding intimacy and sex were most often discrete; they were less likely to be discussed along with child, social, or financial conflicts (Papp et al., 2013). Although intimacy issues appeared difficult to work through, intimacy appeared to be a positive component of relationships. The complex issues and discussions associated with intimacy conflicts were often better handled by well-established couples than by couples with additional challenges such as psychological distress and poor communication skills (Papp et al., 2013).

In order to achieve positive sexual goals, individuals tend to use both verbal and nonverbal communication. The vocabulary used for talking to each other about sex will also establish connections between the quality of the relationship and a person's language. Some researchers suggested that most sexual partners, when conversing about sex, avoid using clinical terms. In most cases slang terms or euphemisms are used by the

couple (Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Rehman et al., 2011). In general, men tend to use more obscene words than do women; they also use more words to represent their genitalia. Notably, greater closeness and relationship satisfaction was experienced by men who used erotic language with their partners on a daily basis (Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Rehman et al., 2011). For women, greater use of erotic language was associated with increased communication and relationship satisfaction as well as increased closeness with their partners. Overall, women found that using explicit language and specifying the sex acts they wanted to engage in, enhanced their sexual experience and resulted in increased satisfaction (Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Rehman et al., 2011).

Individuals, who expressed their sexual likes and dislikes to their partners, consistently reported greater sexual well-being (Byers, 2011; Hess & Coffelt, 2012). It is through sexual self-disclosure that individuals can establish a sexual relationship with their partners that is mutually pleasurable. Persons who adequately self-disclosed often reported fewer sexual concerns and problems as well as better partner understanding of each other's needs (Byers, 2011; Hess & Coffelt, 2012). Those that did not or could not self-disclose, often experienced poor partner understanding and interference with developing a sexually satisfying relationship (Byers, 2011; Hess & Coffelt, 2012).

### **Relationship Education**

Premarital education has become more prevalent over the past few decades. This has increased the number of programs and counseling options available to individuals. (Fawcett et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2006) The majority of the programs to date are targeting persons entering their first marriage. Little research has been conducted on

second or third marriages and the potential impact of premarital education on the rate of divorce (Doss et al., 2009). In some instances programs have surged from government insistence on providing education and counseling to individuals planning to marry in an effort to keep the cost of divorce down (Stanley, 2001). In other instances, religious groups and organizations have made premarital counseling mandatory with the intent to promote high-quality, satisfying relationships for the adults and, ultimately, for the children of this union (Stanley, 2001).

In assessing both religious and nonreligious programs, studies have shown no significant differences in divorce rates for participants of either education or counseling programs (Markman et al., 2013; Parker, 2007; Stanley et al., 2006). Many of the educational programs incorporated some level of empirically based information and applied it to the teachings. Many of the premarital education programs, particularly when religion based, worked within three primary goals, as discussed in the following paragraphs (Stanley, 2001).

### **Taking Time**

The first goal is to slow couples down. Requiring them to attend premarital education or counseling gives the couple time to focus on each other and get to know each other better. During this time of understanding, couples have more time to think about their decision to marry and to review any weaknesses in their relationship that should be addressed. In addition, it helps individuals to reduce the number of impulsive decisions, including the decision to marry precipitously (Stanley, 2001).

**Reflecting on the Importance of Marriage**

The second goal is to foster the realization that marriage is an important and worthwhile commitment. It marks an important step in life with long-term consequences, something that should be considered thoroughly and carefully. The transition to marriage is all too often not considered as it should be, and marriage is seen as something trivial or consumer oriented. In current society, the respect for marriage and the marriage ceremony have diminished (Stanley, 2001). The second goal, therefore, seeks to raise the couple's awareness that their wedding starts a series of important rituals intended to strengthen the foundation of marriage and to point out the importance of preparing for the marriage (Stanley, 2001; Wong, 2009).

**Strengthening the Protective Factors**

Couples may learn that they can turn to others for help, particularly when things in their relationship become difficult. If they have a positive experience in premarital education, they are more likely to seek help or advice from others when the need arises. Ideally, persons who encounter difficulties will seek help earlier in the process of deterioration (Parker, 2007; Stanley, 2001).

Empirically based programs such as the Prevention and Relationship Education Program, or PREP, were specifically designed with the intent to lower the odds of divorce while increasing the chances of a happy marriage. In other words, they seek to reduce the risk factors and strengthen the protective factors (Markman et al., 2013; Wong, 2009). These types of programs were founded on research that suggested that patterns of negative interactions actually could discriminate between couples that were

distressed and those that were not distressed, and when they were assessed premaritally, they could be associated with future distress and, in some cases, divorce (Markman et al., 2013). Such programs strongly focused on communication between the couple, relationship enhancement, commitment, conflict management, fostering of emotional safety, physical safety, and ways to protect and preserve connections that were positive (Markman et al., 2013). Some programs also explored differences and similarities in the couples values, cultural differences, relationships with extended families, and expectations of the marriage (Wong, 2009).

Notably, further meta-analyses are needed to fully support claims of the efficacy of premarital education programs. Also needed are studies conducted outside a university or church setting, studies that include participants older than 30 years, studies that look at relationships that have lasted longer than 2 years, and studies of persons with varied socioeconomic status and ethnic background, as well as different levels of educational attainment. Additionally, it may be important to study programs that teach participants how to implement the skills covered in these programs in their day-to-day functioning (Fawcett et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2006; Wong, 2009). Considering that most people who divorce remarry and that second marriages have a higher likelihood of ending in divorce, it seems important to understand the effects of premarital education on the rate of divorce for those entering second or third marriages (Doss et al., 2009).

### **Implications of Relationship Satisfaction**

Relationship satisfaction implies that a relationship is relatively stable and that the couple is able to work through most, if not all, of their issues, disagreements, and

difficulties. This implies that, within the relationship, partners compromise and are willing to give and take in order to assure satisfaction for both partners (Cordova et al., 2005; Luo et al., 2008). The assumption is that the positive atmosphere of a satisfying relationship will provide an increasingly stable and positive environment for children, giving those children a better chance to grow into well-rounded adults who will be able to engage in positive relationships of their own (Abbey & Den Uyl, 2001).

### **Mental Health Implications**

Marriage has long been considered beneficial not only for couples but also for children and communities. Individuals who were married had a tendency to be healthier than those who were unmarried. Married people not only live longer, but are at less risk for both clinical depression and hypertension (O'Rourke et al., 2011; Wong, 2009). Since the mid-1970s, marital satisfaction among American couples has been reportedly declining (Markman et al., 2013; Pedersen et al., 2011). Not only is there evidence that shows that marital distress affects physical health negatively such as immune system functioning, but there is also evidence that mental well-being is negatively impacted with psychological disorders and poor work productivity. Notably, it also affects children psychologically, socially, and in school performance (Doss et al., 2009; Markman et al., 2013; Segrin et al., 2009; Stanley, 2001; Wong, 2009).

Stable intimate relationships are more likely to reduce stress and anxiety in individuals allowing them to feel content, happy, and even overjoyed in their relationships. For many adults, their romantic relationship is the most central and enduring social relationship. The quality of intimate relationships has been linked to



lower rates of depression and greater life satisfaction, as well as being a critical factor of personal adjustment and well-being (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011). Diagnostic and subclinical levels of depression are influenced by poor relationship quality; the former are considered to be a high-risk factor. The erosion of positive elements such as couple cohesion, intimacy, and emotional acceptance also increase a person's depressive symptoms. Conversely, depressive symptoms may increase problems associated with how partners handle conflict and adjust in their relationship (Schudlich et al., 2011).

### **Behavioral Implications**

Poor relationship satisfaction can, at times and with certain people, take on a negative physical aspect. Physical aggression between partners is associated with a host of negative outcomes for both the adults and the children involved, ranging from mental and physical health problems to reduced work productivity and cognitive abilities (Rhoades et al., 2010). Conflict styles and tactics that are negative and hostile have been linked to a multiplicity of physical health outcomes such as exaggerated physiological responses in the immune, cardiovascular, and endocrine systems. Ultimately, it can be assumed that well-rounded individuals are more productive and stable members of society (Segrin et al., 2009).

## **Implications of Relationship Education**

### **Mental Health Implications**

Overall, research has revealed that premarital education significantly correlated with lower levels of marital conflict and divorce and appeared to lead to higher levels of

marital quality and interpersonal spousal commitment (Fawcett et al., 2010; Markman et al., 2013; Stanley et al., 2006). Results showed that the ways in which couples attended to positive and negative events in their marriage often were predictors of divorce (Bischoff, 2002). Therefore, premarital education programs have the task of reducing any risk factors and their harmful impacts, which individuals bring into relationships, thereby improving the quality of life for these adults and their children (Markman et al., 2013; Stanley, 2001).

### **Behavioral Implications**

In an effort to implement premarital education programs, many states have encouraged initiatives that lead individuals who are planning to marry toward a premarital education program. Similarly, religious groups and organizations have implemented mandatory counseling or education for couples prior to conducting the marriage ceremony, all in an effort to strengthen relationships (Stanley, 2001).

Yet, a premarital education program may not always lead to an improvement of the quality of the relationship. In some cases, such an educational or counseling program can help prospective partners to recognize that they should not marry, thereby preventing a likely future divorce. In general, premarital educational programs aim at teaching effective communication techniques and problem-solving skills, intended to aid individuals to achieve satisfying relationships (Fawcett et al., 2010). Some programs also focus on fostering emotional safety, a deepening commitment, and how to protect and preserve positive connections (Markman et al., 2013). The effect of these programs may not endure for the entire duration of the relationship, but may diminish after 10 years, as

reported by Stanley et al. (2006). Therefore, many programs aim at instilling in participants the notion to seek assistance early on when difficulties in coping or dealing with future relationship difficulties arise (Stanley, 2001). In particular, these programs seek to establish a proactive attitude, rather than a reactive one, when coping with relationship difficulties becomes necessary (Wong, 2009).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented a review of the literature and the evolution of the current state of the FST, which will serve as the theoretical framework of this study. I described my literature search strategy with a focus on studies examining personality characteristics as related to relationship satisfaction that used the 16PF. I also reviewed studies that used the MSI-R and explored the significant contribution of each of the common constructs associated with relationship satisfaction (i.e., affective communication, gender role orientation, problem solving, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction), in order to establish the meaning of relationship satisfaction for this study. Additionally, I established that the literature search produced no studies on premarital workshops with a minority population within a 5-year time frame, particularly the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. The few available studies on premarital education programs were of mostly Anglo college students who had been married for less than 2 years. Neither did the literature search produce studies that researched the effects of personality characteristics on marital satisfaction for persons who have attended a premarital workshop. The few studies that were found on personality characteristics and marital

satisfaction primarily used the Big Five model of personality and had a mainly Anglo participants.

Therefore, further meta-analyses are needed to fully support claims of the effect of personality characteristics on relationship satisfaction and the efficacy of premarital education programs. Information on the impact of personality characteristics on marital satisfaction for those who have attended a premarital educational program, studies conducted outside a university or church setting, studies that include participants older than 30 years, studies that look at relationships of those that have attended a premarital education program that have lasted longer than 2 years, and studies of persons with varied socioeconomic status and ethnic background, as well as different levels of educational attainment are highly desirable (Fawcett et al., 2010; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Stanley et al., 2006; Wong, 2009).

This study strives to fill a few of the gaps in the literature. The first of these is to recruit and assess Hispanic persons who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop in Spanish; the second is to recruit and assess persons who attended within the last 5 years; the third is to recruit and assess persons over the age of 30; and, finally, to assess for effects personality characteristics may have on marital satisfaction in persons who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop.

In Chapter 3, I present the research methods proposed for this nonexperimental quantitative study, including research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and data collection, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations in research and the protection of the participants' rights.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to examine the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in individuals who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The focus was on the influence of personality characteristics, time since attendance of the program, gender, ethnicity, and age as the independent variables on relationship satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction as the dependent variables.

In this chapter, I discuss the research methods, including a review of design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and data collection, and the data analysis procedures. A review of the threats to statistical validity, including reliability of the instruments, assumptions, sample size, and the measures taken to protect the participants' rights, concludes the chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

This was a quantitative study employing a nonexperimental design. The goal was to collect numerical data with the use of psychometrically sound instruments to evaluate the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in individuals who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The global personality factors of the 16PF and a demographics questionnaire seeking six interval responses (including time since attendance of the program, gender,

ethnicity, and age) were used to identify the independent variables. The level of relationship satisfaction was obtained with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R, and eight subscales of the MSI-R (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction).

A nonexperimental design was chosen for this study. The advantage of using a nonexperimental design was that it is a strong design for research, requiring only a single observation (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). An experimental design would serve no purpose in this study because it would be virtually impossible to establish a cause-and-effect relationship because it is not possible to manipulate personality traits. A disadvantage of the nonexperimental design is that neither a control group nor random assignments are employed (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

I did consider other approaches, but they had to be rejected. One such approach was mixed methods. Although the mixed methods approach uses multiple research methods and offers unique advantages, it was not appropriate for this study because personality characteristics and levels of relationship satisfaction are difficult to define. People have different definitions and even use a different language to describe the same thing; therefore, it would have been difficult to categorize and assess personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction among the various personalities of the sample (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). In this study, only questionnaire surveys were used. Likewise, a qualitative approach was rejected because naturalistic observations or interviews with open-ended questions, eliciting answers with deeper meaning and

personal interpretations, might have yielded a multitude of answers that would have been difficult to categorize and to report the answers in a coherent and concise manner (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The nonexperimental survey design was considered to be most suitable approach for this study.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

The population for this study consisted primarily of persons of Hispanic background whose primary language was Spanish. Approximately 400 prospective participants were available who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. I planned to solicit individual responses, not couples responses, from participants of both genders, different age brackets, and with different lengths of relationship and different lengths of time since their participation in the weekend retreat. The demographic features of the participants are provided as descriptive statistics.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

I decided to use convenience sampling with the available prospective participants. An advantage of this sampling method is that it allows researchers to find and recruit participants quickly. A disadvantage of convenience sampling is that the sample may not be representative of the whole population and, thus, the results could be skewed (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Because this study was conducted with participants in a weekend workshop, which the participants had attended voluntarily, convenience sampling could provide adequate information in that the primary inclusion criterion was attendance at the

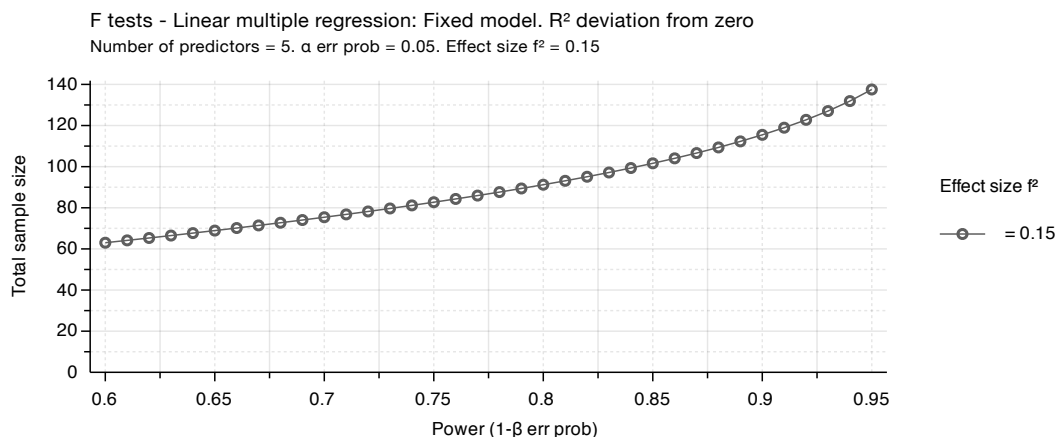
weekend workshop. Those who had attended the weekend workshop within the last 5 years were invited to participate in the study; thus, the data obtained came from a self-selected sample of those who responded to the invitation. This self-selected convenience sample was able to fulfill both requirements of the study: participant characteristics and effective sample size (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

The research utilized extensions of the general linear model, including multiple linear regression analysis and multivariate regression analysis. Multiple regression requires a large sample size in order sufficiently to rule out chance as an explanatory mechanism in defining the relationship between the predictors and the response variable (Cohen, 1988). The alpha level for this study was set at .05, and the sample size was calculated in order sufficiently to support a power of .8. The expectation for this research was that it would discover a generally accepted medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). The predetermined parameters of  $\alpha = .05$ , power = .8 and a medium effect size, G\*Power 3.1.7 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007; Mayr, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Faul, 2007) were used to calculate an appropriate sample to assure empirical validity. Based on these calculations, a sample of at least 92 participants was deemed sufficient for the study (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2008).

A shortcoming of conducting statistical tests is the possibility of committing a Type I error. A Type I error occurs when statistical tests suggest that a real relationship exists between variables when, in fact, the results are likely attributable to coincidence. In other words, a Type I error occurs when one rejects the null hypothesis when it is, in fact,



true. Because I employed convenience sampling, the appropriate alpha level was set at .05 to mitigate the risk of committing a Type I error.



*Figure 1.* Power shown as a function of sample size, formulated with the use of G\*Power 3 software.

### Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited from a list provided by the coordinators of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, identifying approximately 400 adults who had attended the program within the last 5 years. I approached only workshop participants who resided in the Southwestern United States for the purpose of convenience sampling. Once these workshop participants were identified, I mailed an initial invitation to each prospective participant (see Appendix B). The initial letter was written in both English and Spanish. The invitation to participate also provided a link to the study website, which featured a description of the proposed study. Participants were given an opportunity to accept participation in the study by returning a self-addressed, stamped postcard, on which they needed to check *accept participation* within 10 working days, or they could log on to the website, [www.rmadastudy.com](http://www.rmadastudy.com), to accept participation

(see Appendix C). The postcard and website also asked them to indicate if they preferred written materials in English or Spanish. Only those who returned the postcard or responded online to indicated *accept participation* received additional information. Additional information was mailed in their preferred language. The initial invitation also provided information regarding the research project and assured participants regarding the protection of their privacy. Participants were also informed about an incentive for participation, how to contact the researcher or the university for additional information if necessary, and how to obtain the results of the study if desired. Additionally, the invitation advised potential participants that, if they accepted the invitation to participate, I would mail them an envelope containing the study materials.

Once I received the postcard or website acceptance, I mailed the envelope with the research material in the participant's preferred language. This mailing included a detailed explanation of the research purpose, instructions on how to complete the enclosed materials, as well as my contact information (see Appendix D). An informed consent form, requesting the use their information in the results of the study and an explanation of the protection of the participants' rights, was included. The demographics survey (see Appendix E), the 16PF and MSI-R questionnaires, a resource list for follow-up services (see Appendix F), and a list of restaurants from which they could choose their incentive in the form of a \$25 gift card (see Appendix G) was also included in the packet. Last, a self-addressed, stamped manila envelope was provided to facilitate the return of the completed materials.

I requested that the participants return the completed information within 10 working days. Those who did not return their completed packets within the specified time frame received a second letter in their preferred language, reminding them to complete and return the requested information; contact information was also provided, in case they had additional questions or concerns (see Appendix H).

Once the completed materials were returned, I mailed a thank-you letter to the participants in their preferred language, together with a \$25 gift card to the restaurant of their choice, and an explanation of how to obtain the results of the study if desired (see Appendix I).

### **Data Collection**

I collected the data with the self-administered 16PF and MSI-R questionnaires in their paper-and-pencil format, mailed to participants through the U.S. Postal Service. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided to facilitate the return of the completed materials. Self-administered questionnaires have many advantages, including (a) relatively low cost; (b) widespread familiarity among a population used to filling out questionnaires and their relatively minor intrusiveness; (c) ease and efficiency in collecting information, even from distant or remote locations via mail, e-mail, or the telephone; (d) reduced bias because neither visual nor verbal cues can be given by the researcher; (e) increased precision of measurement due to standardized questions; (f) data collection among multiple, dissimilar, or very large groups, researching similar characteristics; and (g) convenience for respondents because questionnaires can be completed any time, any place (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Self-administered questionnaires present disadvantage as well; among them are (a) inflexibility of surveys; (b) low or untimely response rates, which can involve additional costs of follow-up letters; (c) difficulty or impossibility to deal with context; (d) difficulty of participants to recall information or to tell the truth regarding a controversial subject; and (e) the researcher's lack of control over who completes or has input in the questionnaire, even when the intended participant is specified (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were entered into SPSS Version 18.0 for Windows for analysis. The sample demographics included age, gender, ethnicity, and time since the workshop attendance. Means and standard deviations were calculated for variables measured on an interval or ratio scale. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the categorical variables (Howell, 2010).

To examine Research Question 1, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine if there was a significant relationship between personality, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance and marital satisfaction. The dependent variable was the global marital satisfaction measure reported on the MSI-R, and the independent variables included the personality subscales of the 16PF, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop.

To examine Research Question 2, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted to determine if a significant relationship existed between personality profile, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance and each subject's marital

satisfaction profile, which comprised affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction.

### **Multiple Regression**

The data set used in the analyses contained multiple predictor variables. The multiple regression method was used, which allowed the assessment of the collective effect of the predictors on the dependent variable. The use of multiple predictors in the regression model allowed for multivariate comparisons that could decrease the risk of Type I errors (Stevens, 2009).

A common goal of data analysis is to investigate the existence or strength of a relationship between a set of independent variables or predictors on a single dependent variable. Multiple regression is the appropriate analysis when the dependent variable is measured on a continuous or ratio scale and the independent variables are measured on the dichotomous, interval, or ratio scale. The following regression equation was used:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \dots + \beta_ix_i + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

In Equation 1,  $y$  = the response variable,  $\beta_0$  = the model intercept,  $\beta_1$  = the first regression coefficient,  $\beta_2$  = the second regression coefficient,  $x$  = the predictor variables, and  $\varepsilon$  = the residual error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

This research analysis utilized the standard multiple regression method, which involved adding all predictors into the model simultaneously. Standard multiple regression is the appropriate method unless prior theory supports an alternate method. The  $F$  test was used to assess the significance of the set of independent variables on the

dependent variable;  $t$  tests were used to evaluate each independent variable based on the amount of variance accounted for in the dependent variable, separate from variance explained by the other predictors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The multiple correlation coefficient of determination,  $R^2$ , was used to assess the overall variance explainable by the set of independent variables. The effect of each predictor was measured using beta coefficients. For significant predictors, a 1-unit increase in the predictor increased the mean value of the dependent variable by the value of the beta coefficient.

The assumptions of multiple linear regression were constant variance, linear relationship, absence of multicollinearity, and normality of errors. Scatterplots were used to assess whether linearity and homoscedasticity (constant variance) assumptions were violated. The residual error terms were assumed to follow a normal distribution with constant variance. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to assess whether the normality assumption was violated. The data were also assessed for multicollinearity, which exists when the independent variables are highly correlated. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values over 10 suggested the presence of multicollinearity (Stevens, 2009).

### **Multivariate Multiple Regression (General Linear Model)**

This study contained a response variable that was measured with several subscales. In order to use each subscale as a dependent variable in a regression model, multiple linear regression must be extended into multivariate space. This is accomplished by using the general linear model to replace the univariate Gaussian distribution of the error with a multivariate distribution (Wickens, 2004).

Multivariate multiple regression is used when the goal of the study is to model the relationship between a set of explanatory variables measured on the interval scale, or dummy-coded as levels of a factor, on two or more dependent variables measured on the interval scale. The regression equation used in multivariate multiple regression is shown in Equation 2.

$$\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{X}\boldsymbol{\beta} + \boldsymbol{\epsilon} \quad (2)$$

In Equation 2,  $\mathbf{Y}$  = a  $n \times p$  matrix of  $n$  observations on  $p$  response variables;  $\mathbf{X}$  = a  $n \times q$  matrix with  $n$  observations and  $q$  independent variables,  $\boldsymbol{\beta}$  = a  $q \times p$  matrix of regression coefficients, and  $\boldsymbol{\epsilon}$  = a  $n \times p$  matrix containing the residual error terms (Friendly, 2007).

The assumptions of the general linear model include multivariate normality within each of the independent variables, multicollinearity, and homogeneity of covariance matrices, which, unlike the multiple regression model, allows for correlated errors (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005). Multivariate normality was tested by calculating the squared Mahalanobis distance of each data vector  $x_i$  from its sample mean and plotting them against the  $\chi^2$  distribution percentiles (Von Eye & Bogat, 2004). Homogeneity of covariance matrices is the multivariate equivalent to homogeneity of variance and was tested using Box's M test (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). Variance inflation factor (VIF) values over 10 suggested the presence of multicollinearity (Stevens, 2009).

### **Reliability**

Two survey instruments were used in this study for data collection, the 16PF survey and the MSI-R. Both surveys combine several responses to create composite

scores and subscales. When a factor that cannot readily be measured is quantified, using aggregated scores from survey elements, it is necessary to conduct an analysis on the correlations between the elements of the survey to determine their internal consistency, which can be thought of in terms of how well they capture the factor of interest. In order to test for reliability and internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was calculated.

Cronbach's alpha provides the mean correlation between each pair of items and the number of items in a scale (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were evaluated using the guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2010) where  $> .9$  = *excellent*,  $> .8$  = *good*,  $> .7$  = *acceptable*,  $> .6$  = *questionable*,  $> .5$  = *poor*,  $< .5$  = *unacceptable*.

## **Instrumentation**

### **16PF**

**Purpose.** The 16PF, developed by Cattell in 1949, is used as an objective measure of normal personality (see Appendix J). It comprises 16 primary factor scales and five global factor scales. The 16 primary factor scales are warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism, and tension. The five global factors are extraversion, independence, tough-mindedness, self-control, and anxiety. The 16PF has been translated into over 40 languages and may be used in a plethora of settings, including industrial, organizational, clinical, counseling, and educational situations (IPAT, 2009; McLellan & Rotto, 1994).



**Scoring.** The 16PF, a self-administered personality assessment tool, may be administered to individuals 16 years old and older. The test comprises 16 primary factor scales, five global factor scales and the impression management (IM) index. The 16PF is composed of 185 3-choice response items (*true, don't know/unsure, and false*). Each primary factor scale contains 10-15 items, and the IM scale contains 12 items. The scores range from 1-10. Scores from 1-3 are considered as the low range, 4-7 as the average range, and 8-10 as the high range. The mean score is 5.5 with a standard deviation of 2. The test may be taken either on a computer or in a paper-and-pencil format. In this study, I administered only the paper-and-pencil format, which takes approximately 35-50 minutes to complete (IPAT, 2009; McLellan & Rotto, 1994).

Individual responses were scored with the use of four scoring keys. Using the appropriate scoring key, a total raw score was obtained for each scale and the IM index. Then, the personality factor raw scores were converted to sten scores, and the IM score to a percentile. The five global factor sten scores were calculated. Last, the profile sten scores for both the global factors and primary factors were calculated. An interpretation of the primary factor scales and the global factors could be made after the responses had been scored. The results provided information regarding the participants' personality profile (IPAT, 2009). I used the global factor personality profiles to determine if a relationship existed between personality and relationship satisfaction based on gender, ethnicity, age, and length of time since the workshop attendance.

**Psychometric properties.** Reliability of the 16PF has been established; internal and test-retest consistency ranged from .68 to .87, with a mean of .77. Test-retest

reliability for a 2-month period ranged from .70 - .82, with a mean of .80 (IPAT, 2009, McLellan & Rotto, 1994).

Validity for the 16PF has been established through numerous studies that used this diagnostic tool with individuals for a variety of purposes as shown by Booth and Irwin (2011), Cousineau, Hall, Rosik, and Hall, (2007), Irwin, Booth and Batey (2014), and McLellan and Rotto, (1994). When compared with other personality inventories, the 16PF possesses good psychometric properties (Irwin et al., 2014).

Personality characteristics revealed by the 16PF provided useful information toward a better understanding of individual extroversion, anxiety, tough-mindedness, independence, and self-control. Notably, the 16PF has been shown to be useful with persons of various nationalities, age groups, and educational levels (IPAT, 2009, McLellan & Rotto, 1994).

### **MSI-R**

**Purpose.** The MSI-R, developed by Snyder (1997), is used to determine intimate relationship satisfaction (see Appendix J). It was designed to identify the nature and intensity of overt conflict and emotional distance between partners. The MSI-R is composed of 10 scales that assess relationship differences, two validity scales, and one global scale. The 10 scales are affective-communication scale, problem-solving scale, aggression scale, time-together scale, disagreement-about-finances scale, sexual-satisfaction scale, role-orientation scale, family-history-of-distress scale, dissatisfaction-with-children scale, and conflict-over-child-rearing scale (Herrington et al., 2008; Negy

& Snyder, 1997). The MSI-R may be used with persons who are married, cohabitating, or in a significant relationship (Snyder, 2004).

**Scoring.** The MSI-R, a self-administered survey intended to measure relationship satisfaction, can be administered in either English or Spanish. A total of 13 subscales comprise 2 validity scales, 1 global distress scale, and 10 additional scales that assess the dimensions of a person's relationship (Herrington et al., 2008; Negy & Snyder, 1997). The MSI-R is composed of 150 true/false items or, if the person does not have children, 129 items. The subscales of the MSI-R measure affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, dissatisfaction with children, disagreement about finances, conflict over child rearing, sexual dissatisfaction, and global distress. Higher scores indicate greater distress or dissatisfaction (Herrington et al., 2008; Negy & Snyder, 1997; Snyder, 1998). The test may be taken either on a computer or in a paper-and-pencil format. Only the paper-and-pencil format was used in this study; it takes approximately 25 minutes to complete.

Individual responses were scored with the use of the 13 profile scales and then plotted on a standard profile sheet using gender-specific norms. Scores were presented as *t* scores. An interpretation of the scales and a 7-step process for analyzing the results were undertaken after the responses had been scored (Negy & Snyder, 1997, 2000). *T* scores permitted a comparison with the general population and provided information regarding the participant's level of distress in an intimate relationship and how close or how far it fell from the mean. I used the global score and individual subscores to assess self-

reported distress levels in relationship satisfaction based on gender, age, years married, and number of marriages.

**Psychometric properties.** Reliability of the MSI-R has been established; internal and test-retest consistency ranged from .70 - .93, with a mean of .82. Test-retest reliability coefficients on 12 of the subscales for a 6-week period ranged from .74 - .88 and had a mean of .79 (Snyder, 1998).

Validity for the MSI-R has been established through numerous studies that used this diagnostic tool with individuals and families for a variety of purposes, as shown by Herrington et al. (2008), Negy and Snyder (1997, 2000), Snyder, Willis, and Keiser (1981), and Whisman, Snyder, and Beach (2009). Discriminative validity has been confirmed for the disharmony and disaffection scales among a standardized sample of 1,020 couples. Criterion-related validity was confirmed for the disharmony and disaffection scales as well (Herrington et al., 2008).

Relationship strengths and weaknesses revealed by the MSI-R provide useful information toward a better understanding of home environments, sexual dysfunction, financial problems, and physical ailments (Snyder, 2004). Notably, the MSI-R has been shown to be useful with multiple nationalities, age groups, and educational levels. In 2003, Means-Christensen et al. assessed the validity of the MSI-R with nontraditional couples, including gay, lesbian, and cohabitating heterosexual couples. The authors found that the MSI-R scales retained high levels of internal consistency and that the factor scales between nontraditional couples and heterosexual married couples had significant

similarities. Notably, the Spanish adaptation of the MSI-R, when compared to the English version, showed internal consistency and temporal stability (Negy & Snyder, 2000).

### **Demographics Survey**

A brief demographics survey, designed by me as the researcher for this study, was presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University prior to its use in this research (see Appendix K). The demographics survey sought six responses regarding (a) gender, (b) age, (c) length of current relationship, (d) pre- or postattendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, (e) years since attending the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, and (f) whether the respondent had attended the weekend workshop with the current partner. All information will remain confidential; no names were used on any of the questionnaires, including the demographics survey. Results are reported in aggregate form only.

### **Threats to Validity**

#### **Threats to External Validity**

The statistical tests used to answer the research questions were multiple linear regression and multivariate regression analysis. Assumptions pertaining to these tests were as follows: (a) the results will yield a normal distribution; (b) there will be homogeneity of sample variance, and (c) outliers should not be counted in the analysis (Adams, 2008; Pagano, 2010). A normal distribution occurs when all samples yield to a similar statistical estimate, meaning that, when results are plotted on a graph, the majority of the results will converge on the same central value (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). It also was assumed that measurements of variables were homogenous and suggested that

the populations being compared had similarities and would, therefore, remain the same before and after the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008)

An outlier is a statistical estimate that is significantly larger or smaller than a central value. Outliers can influence results and interpretations of the results. If the exclusion of the outliers does not change the results or the statistical analysis of the study, it is possible to exclude the outliers from the study. However, in those studies in which outliers are an important piece of information, the outliers should not be excluded (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

### **Internal Validity**

**16PF.** The 16PF was assessed with the use of the SPSS statistical software to evaluate internal consistency and to determine the reliability of the survey. The 16PF has been standardized with a sample consisting of 2,500 individuals that matched the demographics of the 1990 U.S. Census figures. The sample was randomly selected from among 4,449 people who had been administered the test (McLellan & Rotto, 1994). Reliability of the 16PF has been established; internal and test-retest consistency ranged from .68 to .87, with a mean of .77. Test-retest reliability for a 2-month period ranged from .70 to .82, with a mean of .80 (Cattell et al., 2009; McLellan & Rotto, 1994).

The 16PF instrument was tested across multiple ethnicities and age groups. It has been deemed appropriate for use and translated into more than 40 languages. Extensive research has confirmed the structure of the traits identified across various cultures in France, Italy, New Zealand, Chile, Germany, and Japan. The 16PF may be used in

multiple settings that include industrial, organizational, clinical, counseling, educational, and research environments (Cattell et al., 2009).

**MSI-R.** The MSI-R was assessed with the use of the SPSS statistical software to evaluate internal consistency and to determine the reliability of the survey. The MSI-R has been standardized with a sample consisting of 2,040 individuals. Data were collected in 22 states within the United States, at 53 different locations; samples reflected the general population with respect to gender, age, educational level, geographic region, ethnicity, and occupation (Snyder, 1998). The inconsistency scale is included as a validity measure in order to detect persons who may not have responded honestly, were confused about either test content or directions, or were deliberately noncompliant. The internal consistency estimates had a mean  $\alpha = .82$  (range .70 - .93). Test-retest reliability coefficients on 12 of the subscales for a 6-week period had a mean of .79 (range .74 - .88; Snyder, 1998). The revised scales on the MSI-R measured almost identical constructs as those in the original version of the instrument: Correlations between the original scales and their MSI-R counterparts ranged from .94 - .97 (Snyder, 1998).

The MSI-R instrument was tested across multiple ethnicities and age groups. It has been deemed appropriate for use with both English- and Spanish-speaking populations to determine marital satisfaction. Studies by Negy and Snyder (1997, 2000) demonstrated consistency and validity with multiple ethnic groups. Negy and Snyder (1997) found that the MSI-R was appropriate for use with both Mexican-American and European-American populations. Further explorations of the reliability and equivalence

of the Spanish translation of the MSI-R garnered support when used with the Hispanic population (Negy & Snyder, 2000).

### **Threats to Statistical Conclusion Validity**

This study did not involve an experiment, and, without cause and effect, threats to internal validity cannot be established. However, threats to statistical conclusion validity can occur when incorrect conclusions are drawn about the relationship or when conclusions are mistakenly implied for which there is no basis in fact (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). It was important to take into consideration different aspects of the study that might be a threat to statistical conclusion validity.

Establishing an appropriate sample size was essential to statistical conclusion validity; if the sample size is too small, the researcher may conclude that a relationship exists when no true relationship is extant (Adams, 2008). To reduce chances for committing a Type 1 error even further, a smaller population variance is desirable (Wuensch, 2003). For the purpose of this study, I recruited total of  $N \geq 92$  to meet the minimum required sample size of  $N = 92$ . Notably, the participants were a self-selected convenience sample from the population that had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop in a southwestern state of the United States within the last 5 years.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical considerations were extremely important to me in conducting this study. I made every effort to uphold all ethical standards. Steps taken to ensure the ethical protection of all participants are described in the following sections.



**Ethical Issues in the Research Problem**

The results of this study will have meaning for persons who seek a better understanding of the relationship between personality and relationship satisfaction after attendance at the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. This study may also assist mental health professionals such as counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists better to understand the effect personality has on people's reported level of relationship satisfaction after participating in a relationship workshop. While a clearer understanding of the true impact on relationship satisfaction was expected as a result of this study, the risk to participants appeared to be minimal as they were merely asked to fill out a questionnaire. However, the questionnaire questions regarding the level of satisfaction in their relationships could potentially raise questions or concerns in some participants. I, therefore, provided a list of referral sources to each participant, in case he or she should feel that follow-up services were needed.

**Ethical Issues Pertaining to the Research Question and Purpose**

Each participant was made aware of the purpose of the study in a clear and coherent manner and was neither misguided nor deceived. Participants were assured of confidentiality regarding their participation. They also understood that their participation was voluntary and that they could elect to withdraw from the study at any time (Bersoff, 2003; Fisher, 2003).

**Ethical Issues in Data Analysis and Interpretation**

A written proposal requesting validation to officiate the study was submitted to the Walden University Human Subjects Committee (of the IRB). Only after approval had

been granted, did I take the next step and proceeded with participant recruitment.

Potential participants were first contacted by the program coordinators to request verbal consent for their names to be placed on a list of possible participants in this study. An initial letter outlining the purpose of the study, protection of clients' rights, an informed consent form, and an opportunity to accept participation was sent to each potential participant.

A second packet was mailed to prospective participants containing all the research materials. Participants were asked to sign and return their completed questionnaires. The informed consent form outlined for the participants how their personal anonymity would be protected, namely, by excluding all identifying information from the study. The statement of confidentiality advised participants that their contact information would not be published, sold, or used for marketing purposes; this information is used only for purposes of this study. Participants were advised that the results of the study would be reported in aggregate form and without any identifying information to protect their anonymity. The packet contained a statement of the purpose of the study; a description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts, as well as a description of the benefits of participation; a statement that participation is voluntary; and an explanation of whom to contact with questions or concerns (Bersoff, 2003).

Each participant was assigned a number, and all identifying information was stripped from the data, so that they could be processed only with the assigned numbers. These measures were taken to safeguard the participants' privacy, reduce bias, and maintain the integrity of the study. One master list with the names of the participants and

corresponding numbers is maintained and kept separate from all other information; it is stored in a secure location to which only I as the researcher have access. All of the research materials and data will be kept in a locked cabinet for 7 years after the conclusion of the study, after which all research materials will be shredded. Only I as the researcher will have access to the material and data for the entire 7-year period. No other information will be kept in this file cabinet. The information will not be used for alternate purposes. The analysis and interpretation of the data were conducted honestly and accurately.

### **Ethical Issues in Writing and Disseminating Research**

The collected data were analyzed and checked for accuracy at varying stages during the study. Initially, participant information was checked to assure that all testing materials were completed correctly and returned in their entirety. Scoring and interpretation of the responses were checked multiple times to assure accuracy. Notably, as the researcher, I endeavored to provide accurate and honest results in reporting the findings.

### **Summary**

This chapter contained a description of research methods used in this nonexperimental quantitative study, which sought to explore the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The research design, setting and sample, as well as sample selection were described. The instrumentation, consisting of the 16PF and MSI-R instruments and a demographics survey, was discussed

in detail. Reliability of the instruments was discussed as well as potential threats to statistical conclusion validity. Particular attention was directed toward ethical issues pertaining to research integrity and the protection of the participants' rights.

In Chapter 4, I present the results of the study. I describe the time frame for data collection, recruitment and response rates, baselines of descriptive and demographic characteristics of the sample, and to what extent the sample was representative of the general population. I explain discrepancies in data collection as described in Chapter 3 and describe data analysis and results of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship, if any, between personality characteristics and demographics (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) and relationship satisfaction for adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years, as measured with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R. Another goal of the study was to assess the relationship, if any, between personality characteristics and demographics of the participants and additional outcome variables thought to influence relationship satisfaction (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction), as measured with the eight subscales of the MSI-R. I begin this chapter with a description of the data collection and characteristics of the sample. Then, I present the data-cleaning procedures, a reliability analysis, and the answers to the research questions. Finally, I provide a summary of the results.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Time Frame**

Data collection began in July 2015 and concluded in January 2016. The Preparación de Novios program coordinators provided a list of potential participants. Initially, there were 400 potential participants on the list; however, 100 of them did not meet the inclusion criteria and I removed them from consideration. Those not considered

to be within the scope of the study were individuals who attended part of the weekend workshop, but did not complete the entire 2-day program, and individuals who had not consented to having their information disclosed to third parties. Therefore, 300 invitations to participate were mailed out to persons who had participated in the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. Of these, 29 invitations were returned to sender because of an incorrect mailing address. I presumed that the other 271 invitations to participate were delivered to the intended parties. Eighty-three persons agreed to participate in the study via the participant agreement that was returned by mail. No further inquiries or attempts to recruit those who had not returned the participant agreement form were made. Once the participant agreement had been returned, I sent a packet containing the questionnaires, an informed consent form, a list of restaurants, and list of mental health agencies to the potential participants. Approximately half of the participants returned the questionnaires within 30 days. Reminder letters were sent to 37 participants requesting that they return the completed questionnaires. Of these, 12 participants returned the completed questionnaires. Thus, out of 300 invitations extended, 83 participants could be recruited for the study, which represents a response rate of approximately 28% ( $83/300 \times 100 = 27.6$ ). Of the persons who agreed to participate, only 58 returned the completed questionnaire packets, which yielded a new response rate of approximately 70% ( $58/83 \times 100 = 69.8$ ). Of the overall potential participants invited ( $n = 300$ ), 58 persons returned a completed questionnaire packets, which amounted to the rather low response rate of 19% ( $58/300 \times 100 = 19.3$ ).

### **Collection Discrepancies**

Initially, the effect size for the study was set at .15 with 92 participants. Due to time limits related to the university's requirements for degree completion, as well as financial constraints, the effect size had to be increased to .25 with 58 participants, following several months of efforts to overcome sluggish participation and a low response rate.

### **Descriptive and Demographic Characteristics**

A convenience sample of ( $N = 58$ ) individuals, who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years, was recruited. The participants varied in age (26 to 50 years), gender, and length of time since attending the weekend workshop (0 to 5 years). All participants were of Hispanic descent.

### **Description of the Sample**

The sample appeared to be representative of the population from which it was drawn. The study had normal distributions and showed homoscedasticity. Notably, no outliers were identified so that the entire sample ( $N = 58$ ) could be used in the study. All of the participants were of Hispanic descent and spoke Spanish; thus, they were not representative of the entire U.S. population or of persons from other ethnic groups. The results of the study may therefore not be generalizable to these groups or even to people of Hispanic descent who have attended relationship workshops other than the one these study participants had attended.

## Results

### Preanalysis Data Cleaning

Originally, 58 people participated in the study. Prior to data analysis, the data were examined for outliers. Standardized values were calculated for the continuous variables to look for outliers. Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) stated that scores with standardized values greater than 3.29 or less than -3.29 should be considered outliers. Based on this standard, no outliers were found in the data. Furthermore, none of the submitted surveys had more than 50% of missing responses in the data set data bra. Therefore, analysis was conducted with  $N = 58$  participants.

In order to test the power level of the study, after all the surveys had been collected, a post hoc power analysis was conducted. Using the same parameters as with the a priori power analysis, the post hoc analysis was computed using multiple regression. With an alpha level of .05, a medium effect size of .25, a total of  $N = 58$  participants, and five predictors, the results of the analysis indicated that the achieved power was .81. The results indicated a medium power level for this sample, or a generally accepted power level (Cohen, 1988).

### Descriptive Statistics

Fifty-eight adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years completed the questionnaires. Frequencies and percentages of nominal variables were examined. The majority of participants were in the age group of 36 to 50 years ( $n = 38, 65.5\%$ ), followed by the age group of 26 to 35 years ( $n = 15, 25.9\%$ ). Most of the participants were female ( $n = 36, 62.1\%$ ); some were male



( $n = 22$ , 37.9%). All of the participants were Hispanic ( $N = 58$ , 100.0%). The majority of the participants reported 5+ years since attending the workshop ( $n = 45$ , 77.6%); however, seven participants had attended the workshop within 0 to 2 years (12.1%).

Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages for sample characteristics. Descriptive statistics of continuous variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages for Sample Characteristics*

	Variable	$n$	Percentages
Age	18-25	1	1.7
	26-35	15	25.9
	36-50	38	65.5
	51-80	4	6.9
Gender	female	36	62.1
	male	22	37.9
Ethnicity	Hispanic	58	100.0
Time since workshop	0-2 years	7	12.1
	3-4 years	6	10.3
	5+ years	45	77.6

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Variables*

Continuous Variables	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Extraversion	0	10	1.33	2.83
Tough-mindedness	0	10	2.28	3.65
Self-control	0	9	1.26	2.81
Anxiety	0	10	3.31	3.90
Independence	0	9	1.47	2.93
Global distress	38	66	50.72	6.91
Affective communication	36	69	47.59	8.06
Problem-solving communication	34	66	48.19	7.39
Aggression	40	66	47.29	7.61
Time together	36	64	48.40	6.11
Disagreement about finances	36	64	48.72	7.20
Sexual dissatisfaction	35	67	47.11	7.73
Role orientation	33	61	47.53	5.96
Family history of distress	34	61	46.21	6.90

**Reliability.** Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability and internal consistency were conducted on the subscales of the MSI-R and the personality factors of the 16PF. Also known as the coefficient alpha, Cronbach's alpha provides the mean correlation between each pair of items and the number of items in a scale (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were evaluated according to the guidelines provided by George and Mallery (2010), where  $> .9$  is *excellent*,  $> .8$  is *good*,  $> .7$  is *acceptable*,  $> .6$  is *questionable*,  $> .5$  is *poor*, and  $< .5$  is *unacceptable*. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the marital satisfaction profile subscales was .80, indicating good reliability. Cronbach's alpha for the personality factors of the 16PF was .69, which indicates questionable reliability. The results for these subscales must be interpreted with caution.

## Summary of Results

A linear regression model was created to answer Research Question 1. The results were not statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, meaning that personality factors of age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance did not predict relationship satisfaction,  $F(11, 46) = 0.42, p = .940$ . A multivariate linear regression was conducted to answer Research Question 2. The results were not statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, meaning that age, gender, time since workshop attendance, extraversion, tough-mindedness, self-control, anxiety, and independence did not predict the outcome variables (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction),  $F(64, 243) = 1.25, p = .120$ .

### Statistical Analysis to Answer Research Question 1

RQ 1: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years?

Null Hypothesis 1 ( $H_01$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has no statistically significant relationship with marital satisfaction, as measured with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R for adults who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

Alternate Hypothesis 1 ( $H_{a1}$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has a statistically significant relationship with marital satisfaction, as measured with the global dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R for adults who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

To answer Research Question 1, I conducted a multiple linear regression to see if personality factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance predicted relationship satisfaction. Prior to analysis, assumptions of multiple linear regression (i.e., normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of collinearity) were examined. The assumption of normality was assessed by viewing a P-P scatterplot and a Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test. The results of the KS test were significant ( $p = .020$ ), which could indicate that the data did not follow a normal distribution. However, because the data closely followed the normality trend line in the P-P scatterplot (see Figure 2), the normality assumption was fulfilled. I used a scatterplot between the residuals and predicted values to examine the homoscedasticity assumption. This plot showed random scatter (see Figure 3); thus, the homoscedasticity assumption was met. The absence of multicollinearity was assessed through examination of the variance inflation factors (VIF) for each independent variable; VIF values over 10.0 suggest the presence of multicollinearity (Stevens, 2009). All of the VIF values were below 10.0, fulfilling the absence-of-collinearity assumption.

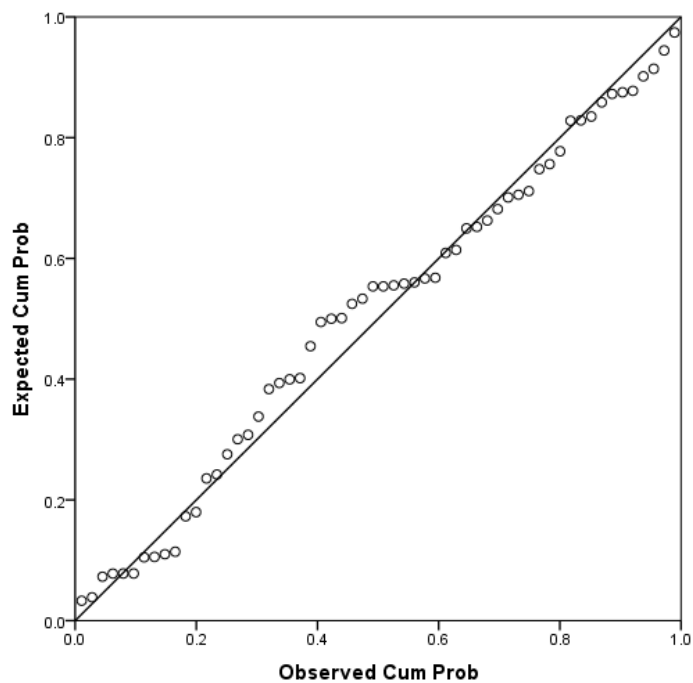


Figure 2. Normality P-P scatterplot of residuals.

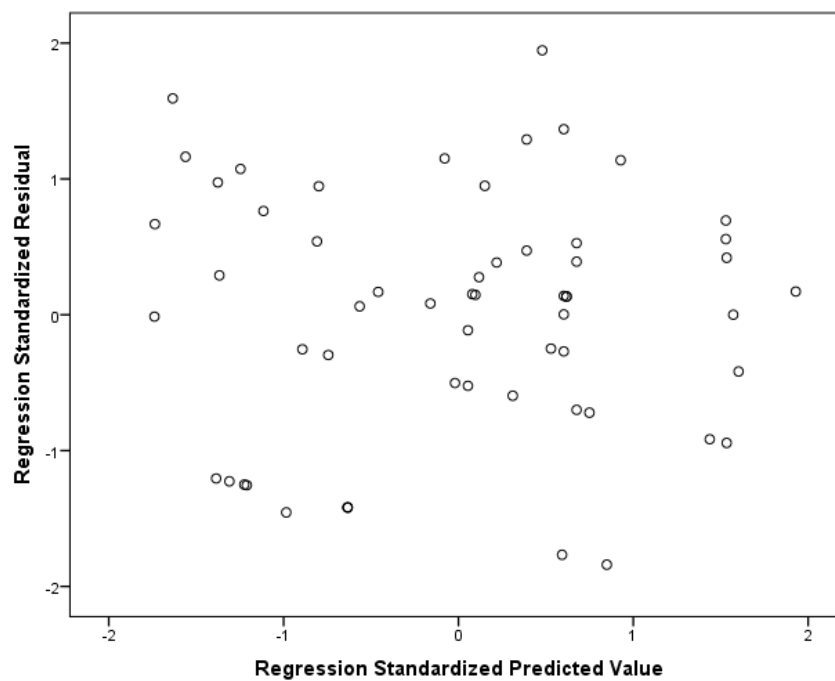


Figure 3. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values.

The results of the multiple linear regression equation were not significant ( $R^2 = .09$ ,  $F(11, 46) = 0.42$ ,  $p = .940$ ). Personality factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance accounted for 9% of the variation in relationship satisfaction. Further analysis was not conducted on individual predictors because the overall model was not statistically significant. Regression results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Linear Regression with Independent Variables Predicting Relationship Satisfaction*

Source		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion		-0.19	0.53	-0.08	-0.36	.720
Tough-Mindedness		-0.37	0.37	-0.19	-1.00	.324
Self-Control		0.01	0.49	0.01	0.02	.981
Anxiety		0.15	0.37	0.09	0.41	.684
Independence		0.02	0.39	0.01	0.05	.961
Gender		1.93	2.21	0.14	0.87	.387
	18-25 years	0.87	8.66	0.02	0.10	.921
Age	26-35 years	-0.17	2.99	-0.01	-0.06	.956
	51-80 years	-3.03	4.06	-0.11	-0.75	.459
Time Since Workshop						
	0-2 years	1.15	4.09	0.06	0.28	.779
	3-4 years	-1.25	3.74	-0.06	-0.34	.739

*Note.*  $R^2 = 0.09$ ,  $F(11, 46) = 0.42$ ,  $p = .940$ . Age group 36-50 years was the reference category. Five or more years since workshop attendance was a reference category.

### Statistical Analysis to Answer Research Question 2

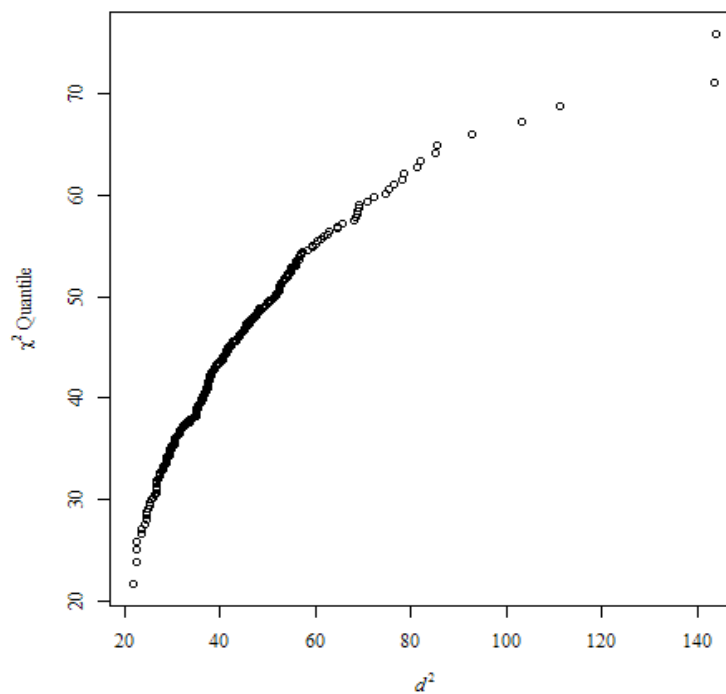
RQ2: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction?

Null Hypothesis 2 ( $H_02$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has no statistically significant relationship with affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction, as measured with the eight subscales of the MSI-R in adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

Alternate Hypothesis 2 ( $H_a2$ ): Personality (as measured with the global personality factors of the 16PF: age, gender, ethnicity, and time since attendance of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop) has a statistically significant relationship with affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction, as measured with the eight subscales of the MSI-R in adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

To answer Research Question 2, a multivariate linear regression was conducted to see if age, time since workshop attendance, gender, extraversion, tough-mindedness, self-control, anxiety, and independence predicted the outcome variables (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction). Prior to analysis, assumptions of multivariate regression (i.e., multivariate normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity) were examined. The assumption of normality was assessed by viewing  $\chi^2$   $Q-Q$  scatterplot of

the squared Mahalanobis distances. Because the data closely followed a normal trend line (see Figures 4), the normality assumption was fulfilled. Scatterplots between the residuals and predicted values were utilized to examine the homoscedasticity assumption. This plot showed random scatter (see Figures 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12); thus, the homoscedasticity assumption was met. The absence of multicollinearity was assessed through examination of the VIF for each independent variable; VIF values over 10.0 suggest the presence of multicollinearity (Stevens, 2009). All of the VIF values were below 2.0, fulfilling the absence-of-collinearity assumption.



*Figure 4.* Chi-Square Q-Q scatterplot of squared Mahalanobis distances.



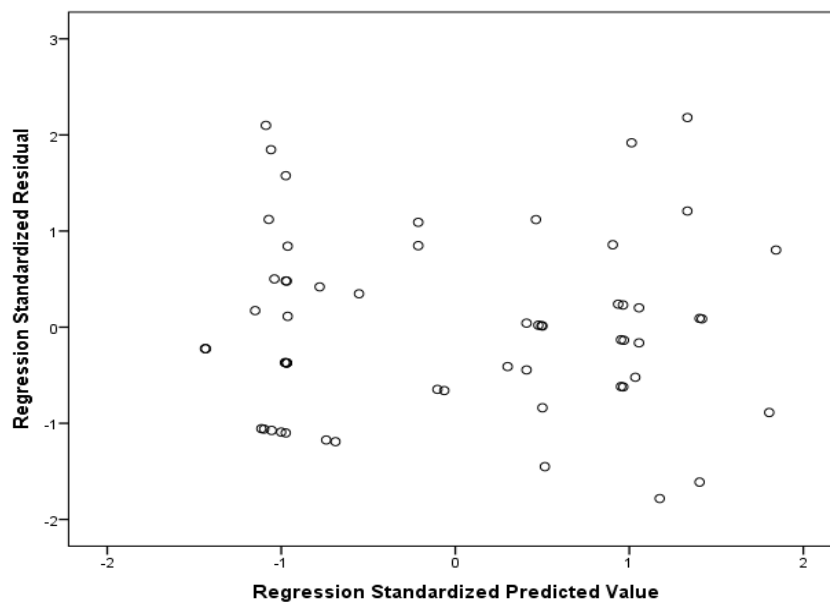


Figure 5. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for affective communication.

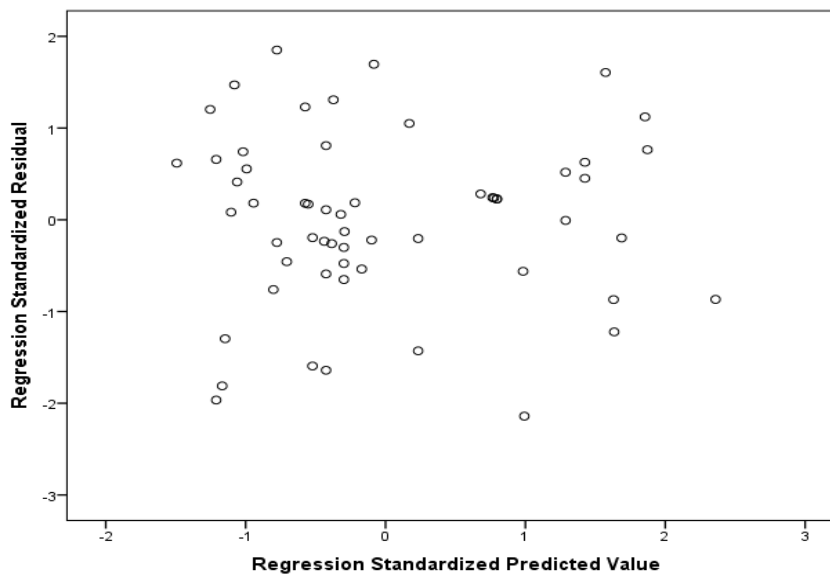


Figure 6. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for role orientation.

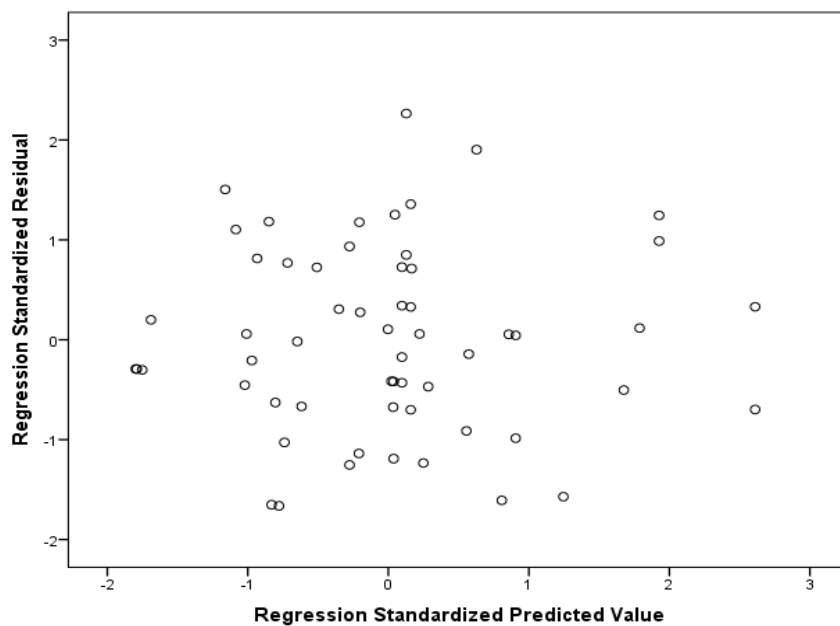


Figure 7. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for problem-solving communication.

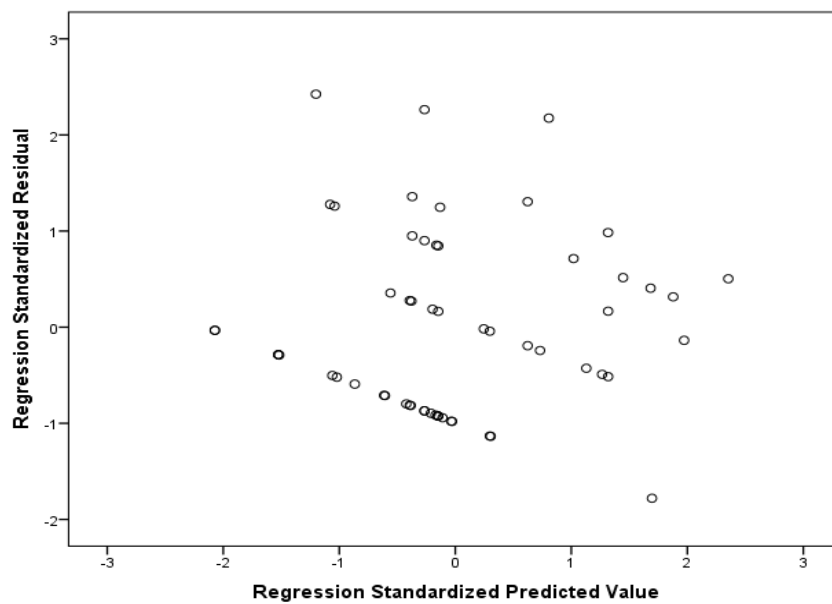


Figure 8. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for aggression.

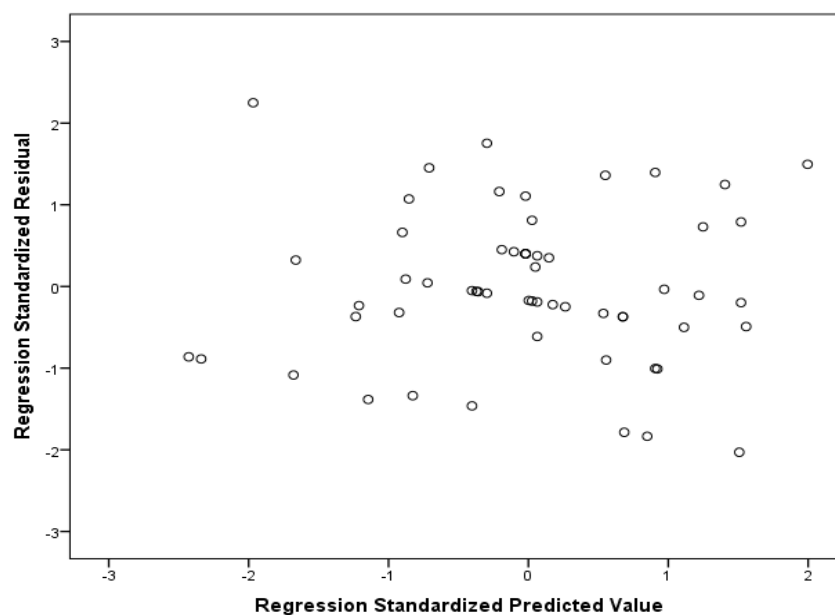


Figure 9. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for family history of distress.

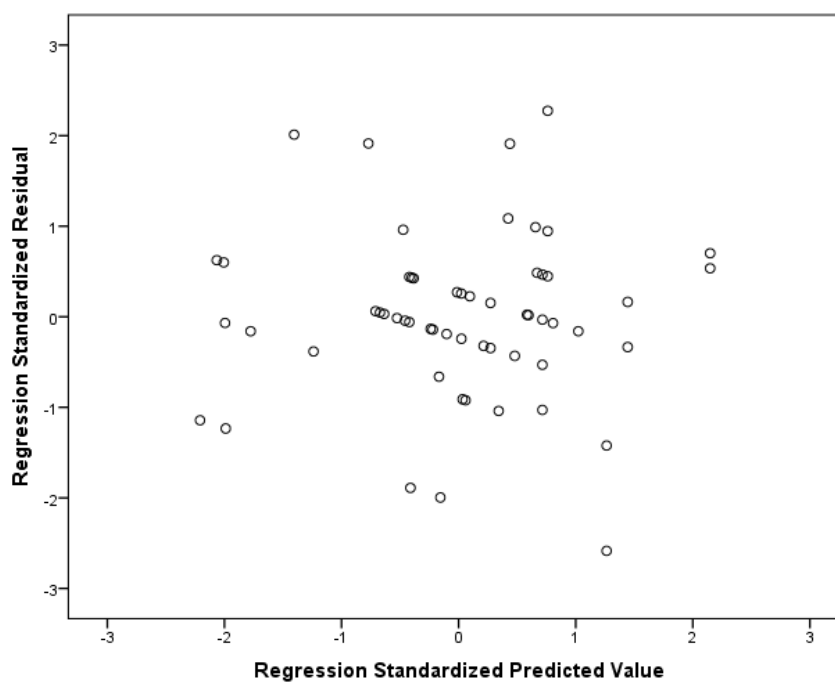
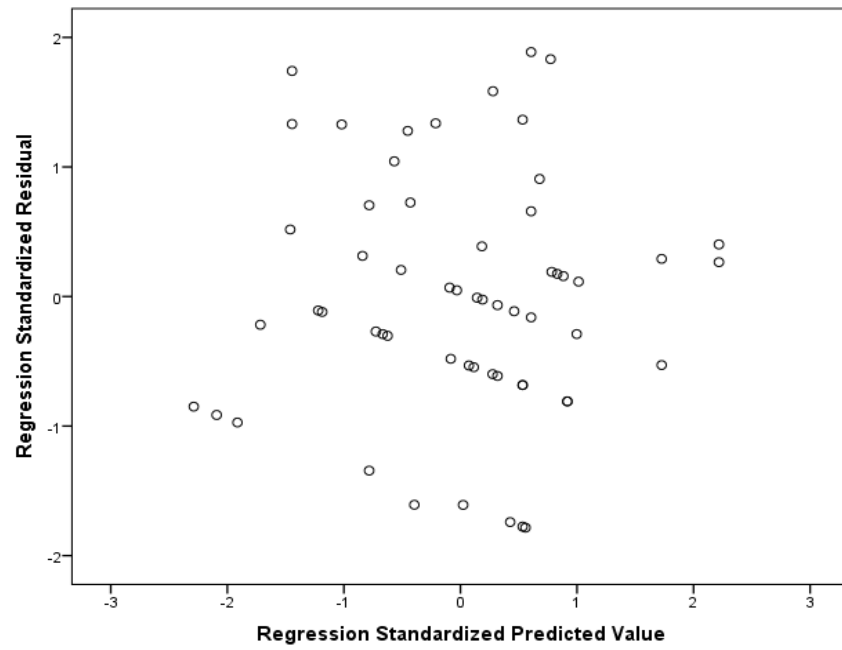
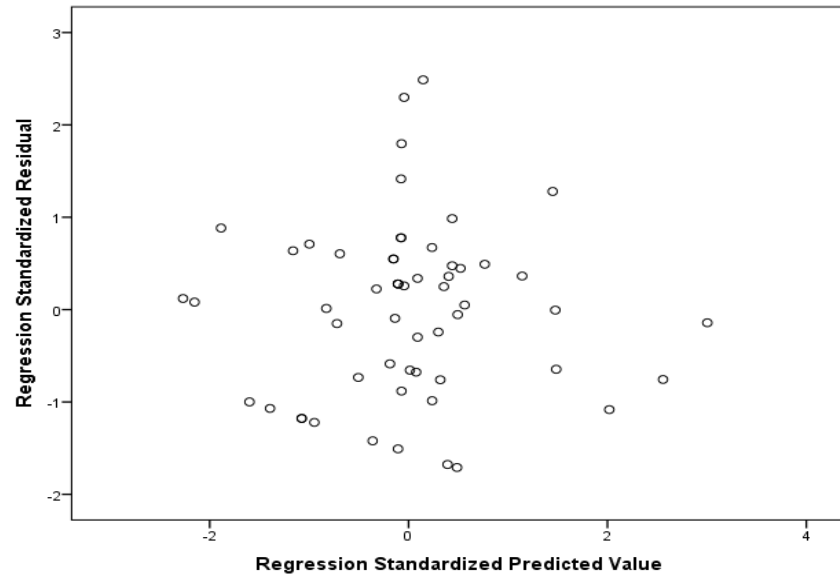


Figure 10. Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for time together.



*Figure 11.* Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for disagreement about finances.



*Figure 12.* Homoscedasticity plot of residuals and predicted values for sexual dissatisfaction.

The results of the multivariate regression analysis were not significant,  $R^2 = 0.14$ ,  $F(64, 243) = 1.25$ ,  $p = .120$ . The predictor variables (i.e., age, time since workshop attendance, gender, extraversion, tough mindedness, self-control, anxiety, and independence) accounted for 14% of the variation in the outcome variables (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction). Further analyses were not conducted because the results of the overall model were not statistically significant. Results of the multivariate regression are presented in Table 4.

Even though the results of the overall model were not significant, there were a few significant effects worth noting. There was a significant positive relationship of independence with role orientation ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $t = 3.09$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Specifically, for every 1-unit increase of role orientation, there was a 0.45-unit increase of independence. There was a significant positive relationship of independence and aggression ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $t = 2.03$ ,  $p = .048$ ). Specifically, for every 1-unit increase of independence, there was a 0.30-unit increase of aggression. Even though the results were not significant, gender and affective communication were trending toward significance ( $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $t = 1.84$ ,  $p = .071$ ).

Table 4

*Results of the Multivariate Regression*

Source	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Affective Communication <sup>a</sup>					
Age	-2.00	2.33	-0.15	-0.86	.395
Time since workshop attendance	1.28	1.94	0.08	0.66	.514
Gender	4.31	2.34	0.37	1.84	.071
Extraversion	-0.09	0.54	-0.03	-0.17	.869
TM	0.10	0.39	0.04	0.25	.804
SC	0.63	0.51	0.22	1.24	.220
Anxiety	0.08	0.39	0.04	0.21	.836
IND	0.13	0.42	0.05	0.30	.765
Role Orientation <sup>b</sup>					
Age	0.37	1.65	0.04	0.23	.823
Time since workshop attendance	-1.08	1.38	-0.09	-0.79	.436
Gender	-0.98	1.66	-0.11	-0.59	.556
Extraversion	0.26	0.39	0.12	0.67	.506
TM	0.20	0.28	0.12	0.72	.477
SC	0.71	0.36	0.33	1.99	0.53
Anxiety	0.40	0.28	0.26	1.47	.149
IND	0.90	0.29	0.45	3.09	.003
Problem-Solving Communication <sup>c</sup>					
Age	1.23	2.32	0.10	0.53	.598
Time since workshop attendance	-1.50	1.94	-0.10	-0.78	.442
Gender	0.96	2.33	0.09	0.41	.683
Extraversion	-0.15	0.54	-0.06	-0.27	.789
TM	-0.07	0.39	-0.04	-0.18	.857
SC	0.14	0.50	0.05	0.27	.785

*(table continues)*

Source	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Anxiety	0.14	0.39	0.07	0.35	.726
IND	-0.01	0.41	0.00	-0.01	.990
Aggression <sup>d</sup>					
Age	-2.60	2.18	-0.20	-1.19	.239
Time since workshop attendance	-1.42	1.82	-0.09	-0.78	.440
Gender	2.65	2.20	0.24	1.21	.233
Extraversion	-0.10	0.51	-0.04	-0.20	.845
TM	0.12	0.37	0.06	0.33	.744
SC	-0.38	0.47	-0.14	-0.80	.427
Anxiety	0.44	0.37	0.23	1.21	.233
IND	0.79	0.39	0.30	2.03	.048
Family History of Distress <sup>e</sup>					
Age	1.25	2.05	0.11	0.61	.545
Time since workshop attendance	-1.18	1.71	-0.08	-0.69	.495
Gender	1.28	2.06	0.13	0.62	.539
Extraversion	-0.32	0.18	-0.13	-0.67	.507
TM	0.05	0.35	0.03	0.14	.890
SC	0.15	0.44	0.06	0.34	.734
Anxiety	0.24	0.34	0.13	0.71	.484
IND	0.38	0.37	0.16	1.05	.304
Time Together <sup>f</sup>					
Age	0.93	1.79	0.09	0.52	.607
Time since workshop attendance	-0.78	1.50	-0.06	-0.52	.604
Gender	-1.11	1.80	-0.13	-0.62	.541
Extraversion	-0.55	0.42	-0.25	-1.31	.198
TM	-0.09	0.30	-0.05	-0.30	.764
SC	0.33	0.39	0.15	0.84	.406

(table continues)

Source	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Anxiety	0.11	0.30	0.07	0.38	.706
IND	-0.30	0.32	-0.14	-0.92	.361
Disagreement About Finances <sup>g</sup>					
Age	0.24	2.16	0.02	0.11	.913
Time since workshop attendance	-1.33	1.80	-0.09	-0.74	.463
Gender	-1.05	2.17	-0.10	-0.48	.634
Extraversion	-0.58	0.50	-0.23	-1.15	.258
TM	-0.06	0.36	-0.03	-0.17	.865
SC	0.38	0.47	0.15	0.82	.416
Anxiety	0.23	0.36	0.12	0.63	.532
IND	0.06	0.39	0.03	0.17	.869
Sexual Dissatisfaction <sup>h</sup>					
Age	-2.64	2.34	-0.20	-1.13	.263
Time since workshop attendance	-1.51	1.95	-0.10	-0.77	.443
Gender	0.09	2.35	0.01	0.04	.968
Extraversion	-0.17	0.55	-0.06	-0.31	.761
TM	0.22	0.39	0.11	0.57	.574
SC	-0.28	0.51	-0.10	-0.55	.588
Anxiety	0.08	0.39	0.04	0.21	.835
IND	-0.31	0.42	-0.12	-0.74	.462

*Note.* TM = tough-mindedness. SC = self-control. IND = independence.

<sup>a</sup> $F(8, 48) = 0.61, p = .765$ ; <sup>b</sup> $F(8, 48) = 1.96, p = .072$ ; <sup>c</sup> $F(8, 48) = 0.32, p = .955$ ; <sup>d</sup> $F(8, 48) = 1.59, p = .153$ ; <sup>e</sup> $F(8, 48) = 0.77, p = .633$ ; <sup>f</sup> $F(8, 48) = 1.21, p = .315$ ; <sup>g</sup> $F(8, 48) = 0.96, p = .481$ ; <sup>h</sup> $F(8, 48) = 0.81, p = .597$ .



### Summary

This chapter began with a description of how the data were cleaned and checked for outliers. It was determined that the data set contained no outliers; therefore, all  $N = 58$  participants were included in the sample and their information used in the data analysis. I provided a description of the sample and a detailed analysis of the results of the data they supplied. To answer Research Question 1, multiple regression analysis was performed to see if personality factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance predicted relationship satisfaction. The results of the multiple regression analysis were not statistically significant, and the  $H_01$  had to be accepted, stating that no relationship existed between the independent variables (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, and time since the workshop) and the dependent variable (i.e., relationship satisfaction). To answer Research Question 2, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted to see if the predictor variables (i.e., age, time since workshop attendance, gender, extraversion, TM, self-control, anxiety, and independence) predicted the outcome variables (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction). The results of the multivariate regression analysis were not statistically significant; therefore, the  $H_02$  had to be accepted, meaning that there was no relationship between the predictor variables (i.e., age, time since workshop attendance, gender, extraversion, tough-mindedness, self-control, anxiety, and independence) and the outcome variables (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving

communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction).

In Chapter 5, I present an interpretation of the findings and show how they relate to those of previous researchers, described in the literature review of Chapter 2. I also examine the results of this study in light of Bowen's family system theory (Papero, 1990). I review the limitations of the study, and I offer recommendations for further research on this topic. I reflect on implications for positive social change, as well as on theoretical implications, and recommendations for practitioners.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to examine the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The focus was placed on the influence of personality characteristics, time since attendance of the workshop, gender, ethnicity, and age as the independent variables, and on relationship satisfaction (Research Question 1) and further outcome variables thought to affect relationship satisfaction (Research Question 2) of affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction as the dependent variables.

A linear regression model was created to obtain answers for Research Question 1. Because the results were not statistically significant,  $H_01$  could not be rejected, stating that no relationship existed between personality factors and demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance) and relationship satisfaction,  $F(11, 46) = 0.42, p = .940$ . A multivariate linear regression was conducted to obtain answers to Research Question 2 regarding the additional outcome variables of affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. Because the results were not statistically significant,  $H_02$  could not be

rejected, meaning that personality factors and demographic characteristics did not predict the additional outcome variables,  $F(64, 243) = 1.25, p = .120$ .

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

#### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years?

Past researchers reported inconsistent findings regarding personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction. Some researchers found personality characteristics to be part of a successful and satisfying relationship, but they had difficulty in identifying which group of characteristics led to satisfaction and success in a relationship (Caughlin et al., 2000; Gattis et al., 2004; Kim et al., 1989; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007). Other researchers concluded that there was a small effect to support that unhappiness may result from fundamental personality dimensions when using the Big Five model of personality (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Yet, other researchers found that persons with greater personality similarities had negative slopes in relationship satisfaction over time, even though their personality characteristics initially showed no relationship (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). One of the studies in which the 16PF had been used as the primary instrument was conducted by Kim, Martin, and Martin (1989). These researchers found that certain personality traits played an essential role in marital satisfaction. The present study, by contrast, could not verify this result with

statistical significance in the target population of adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years.

The results of this study provided a better understanding of whether and how personality characteristics might influence relationship satisfaction and success. The findings provided information on a population not previously studied. Although the results of this study did not provide support for the claim that personality factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since workshop attendance would predict relationship satisfaction, they did provide support for the findings of past researchers who asserted that no relationship existed between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction (Gattis et al., 2004). The results of this study suggested that relationship satisfaction for individuals who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years was not influenced by personality characteristics, age, gender, ethnicity, or time since workshop attendance, when the variables were measured with the 16 PF and the MSI-R. Notably, personality factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and time since the weekend workshop attendance accounted for 9% of the variation in relationship satisfaction.

### **Research Question 2**

RQ2: What is the relationship between personality and demographic characteristics and affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction?

The constructs identified as potentially important contributors to relationship (i.e., affective communication, gender-role orientation, problem solving, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction) were used as outcomes variables in this study. The results of statistical analyses, however, did not show that a significant relationship existed between the predictor variables (i.e., age, time since workshop attendance, gender, extraversion, tough-mindedness, self-control, anxiety, and independence) and the outcome variables associated with relationship satisfaction. The predictor variables accounted for 14% of the variation in the outcome variables. However, three results yielded *p* values that justified further independent examination; these results pertained to affective communication and gender, role orientation and independence, and aggression and independence.

Although this study did not find support for many of the variables and their influence on relationship satisfaction, past researchers found relationships to exist between relationship satisfaction and problem-solving communication, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. Past researchers suggested that when one partner's style of dealing with conflict is incompatible with that of the other, stress, conflict, and dissatisfaction may emerge in the relationship (Mitnick et al., 2009; Schudlich et al., 2011; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin et al., 2009). Those whose styles involved negativity, demand-and-withdrawal patterns, competitiveness, and conflict avoidance were most often identified as having lower levels of relationship satisfaction and frequently depression (Mitnick et al., 2009;

Schudlich et al., 2011; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin et al., 2009). Those whose style of conflict resolution was positive and constructive were more often associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Mitnick et al., 2009; Schudlich et al., 2011; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin et al., 2009). Additionally, individuals with a family history of aggression and violence appeared to be at higher risk for aggression and violence in their own romantic relationships. Not surprisingly, aggression was most often associated with low relationship satisfaction in couples (Durtschi et al., 2010; Shortt et al., 2006; Timmons-Fritz et al., 2012). Researchers also found that spending time together increased relationship satisfaction when the time spent together consisted of positive rituals of celebration, traditions, and family interaction (Giblin, 1995; Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). When the time spent together was filled with negative, rigid, hollow, and oppressive family rituals, then the relationships were less satisfying (Giblin, 1995; Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). Furthermore, couples with financial disputes often had increased marital dissatisfaction and were more likely to end in a break-up or divorce (Dew, 2011; Vogler, 2005). Finally, relationship satisfaction has often been associated with sexual satisfaction and frequency of sexual relations as well as the perception of the spouse's satisfaction with the quality and frequency of sexual intercourse (Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Litzinger & Coop Gordon, 2005).

Whereas the results of this study did not show a significant relationship to exist between relationship satisfaction and personality characteristics (i.e., extraversion, tough-mindedness, self-control, anxiety, or independence), age, time since workshop attendance, or gender, they did, however, point to some findings that invited a closer

look. The relationship between affective communication and gender yielded a  $p$  value of .071; while this  $p$  value was not at the desired .05 score or less, independent examination of the relationship between these two variables may be worthwhile. This examination may provide additional information regarding an association between marital communication and marital satisfaction, as had already been suggested by previous researchers (Burlison & Denton, 1997; Caughlin & Vangelisti, 1999; Hess & Coffelt, 2012; Rehman et al., 2011; Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007). Notably, the findings of the present study supported those of past research, which suggested that patterns of ability or capacity effectively to communicate goals and feelings, as well ability to identify and express emotions and empathy, contribute to healthy relationships (Cordova et al., 2005). In some instances, women reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction when their partners verbally expressed gratitude for their work contributions (Lambert & Fincham, 2011). Overall, positive and negative communication styles were highly correlated with levels of relationship satisfaction, which suggested that communication skills play an important role in healthy relationships (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007).

The findings of this study concerning the relationship between role orientation and independence ( $p = .003$ ) were similar to those of earlier research findings. Couples with similar gender ideologies were more likely to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction, regardless whether they were traditional or egalitarian in outlook (Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2011; Minnotte et al., 2010). A person's beliefs and expectations regarding gender roles appear to influence relationship satisfaction. In some relationships,



different ideologies did not diminish the level of satisfaction, particularly in relationships where women espoused a traditional ideology and their partners reported an egalitarian ideology (Minnotte et al., 2010). Men reported the highest levels of satisfaction when their partners expressed the same ideology or traditional values. By contrast, women reported the lowest level of relationship satisfaction when they felt strongly egalitarian, had high demands and increased levels of stress placed upon them at work, and their partners held on to traditional ideologies (Minnotte et al., 2010). Increased dissatisfaction was expressed by partners with traditional beliefs whose partners' behaviors, they believed, diverged from what was socially acceptable (Schwarzwald et al., 2008).

Last, the findings of this study in regard to aggression and independence ( $p = .048$ ) were similar to those of earlier studies. Other researchers indicated that success and satisfaction in relationships may be influenced by how couples argue, disagree, use their conflict-resolution styles, and reciprocate with either positive or negative affect or supportiveness (Hanzal & Segrin, 2009; Schwarzwald et al., 2008; Segrin et al., 2009). For the most part, couples are resolving conflicts continuously with little emotional grief, trauma, or negative impact on their relationship. However, some conflicts can be detrimental to the relationship, leave lasting emotional scars, and disrupt the psychological closeness of the partners (Gordon et al., 2009; Slotter et al., 2012). Notably, physical aggression in couples is associated not only with low relationship satisfaction, but also with high instability and eventual separation (Shortt et al., 2006).

**Bowen's FST**

As a way to enhance treatment options, past researchers have used FST to understand how adults initiate, create, and maintain intimate relationships (Skowron, 2000). Bowen's FST is considered to be comprehensive in its explanation of both the development and maintenance of intimate relationships (Mones & Schwartz, 2007; Skowron, 2000). FST helped guide this research by providing a basic explanation of individual processes of emotional stimuli; it also explained, from a systems perspective, the use and effect of previously acquired information and experiences. FST facilitated the understanding of how individuals manage to maintain their links to the social and physical environment; it further explained multiple concepts such as the multigenerational transmission process, family projection processes, the nuclear-family emotional system, triangles, differentiation of self, societal emotional processes, emotional cut-off, sibling position in the family, and contexts that influence the individual's level of relationship satisfaction (Mones & Schwartz, 2007; Skowron, 2000).

The findings of this study were not statistically significant and, therefore, could not clarify links that may have an impact on a person's social or physical environment or the many concepts and contexts that may influence relationship satisfaction on the individual level. Neither did the findings provide insight into how individuals process various factors or how various personality structures might adapt to these processes and what impact may result for intimate relationships, particularly through third-party interventions such as the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. Long-term trends in the relationship between personality and relationships satisfaction among couples who

had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years were not identified.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations are recognized in this study. First, to participate in this study, individuals had to agree independently to complete the questionnaires and survey and return them to the researcher. The research was dependent on the physical mailing of agreements to participate and the completed questionnaires. Additionally, the invitation to participate went, in most cases, to both partners in the relationship as the program coordinators provided the information for each partner. It is possible that one partner may have influenced the other either to participate or not to participate. Second, because the 16PF and MSI-R are self-report inventories, some social desirability bias may be present in the answers. The level of the participants' candor could not be verified, nor could it be ascertained if they completed their questionnaires independently and without looking at their partners' responses.

Third, the sample was drawn from participants in a Preparación de Novios weekend workshop, who were also aware that they would receive a \$25 gift certificate for their participation. It is possible that this might have affected the complete truthfulness of their responses and prompted their willingness to participate. Fourth, the population size was rather small, which made it difficult quickly to recruit an adequate sample. Additionally, time constraints may have impacted the final number of participants. Fifth, the response rate of the agreement to participate in the study was low (83 individuals, or 28%, out of 300 invitations), and subsequently the number of returned

and completed questionnaires was even lower (58, or 19%). Sixth, no control group was established for this nonexperimental study.

### **Recommendations**

While the findings of this study were not statistically significant, they provided, nevertheless, suggestions for further research. This study focused on individual relationship satisfaction and personality characteristics. A follow-up study with both partners would be useful to determine and compare each partner's personality characteristics to assess the couple's relationship satisfaction. This would help to clarify if similarity or differences in partners' personality characteristics impact their reported relationship satisfaction, particularly because past researchers found that personality characteristics were an important part of successful and satisfying relationships (Caughlin et al., 2000; Gattis et al., 2004; Kim et al., 1989; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

Similarly, research could be expanded to include a larger and more diverse population by recruiting couples that have attended different premarital education programs, not merely the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. The inclusion of multiple programs might facilitate recruitment. One of the overall results of this study showed that, on both the global distress scale and the subscales of the MSI-R, scores were at the low end of the scales, suggesting that these individuals described their relationships as satisfying and may have viewed their partners as good friends (Snyder, 1997). A comparison study of couples who had participated in premarital education programs and couples who had not could provide additional answers regarding the effect

of these programs on relationship satisfaction. The comparison group could provide additional information regarding personality types that may be inclined to participate in these kinds of programs versus those who do not. Additional studies of adults who have attended premarital education programs would increase the number of existing studies and expand the knowledge base regarding these programs' impact and usefulness (Baucom et al., 2011; Gattis et al., 2004).

Further research to assess the efficacy of the weekend workshop may provide additional information as to the true impact that such educational programs have on relationship satisfaction. Assessing relationship satisfaction of individuals who attend the program both before and after the workshop may provide additional insight regarding the impact the information provided to couples may have on relationship satisfaction, particularly because past studies have not focused on the efficacy of premarital education programs (Fawcett et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2006; Wong, 2009). To understand if the workshops influence relationship satisfaction, questionnaires could be administered at the beginning of the workshop and again at a designated time after the workshop and assessed for significant impacts on relationship satisfaction.

Although the null hypotheses could not be rejected in this study, two factors plus personality characteristic—role orientation and independence and aggression and independence—were individually significant. One factor plus personality characteristic— affective communication and gender—was trending toward significance. Further research on these individual factors and their relationship to personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction may provide more comprehensive answers, notably in view of

the fact that other researchers found meaningful results when considering these variables and relationship satisfaction.

It is noteworthy that the majority of past studies on relationship satisfaction and personality characteristics used the Big Five model of personality, not the 16PF instrument. Without further study, it is difficult to conclude whether the use of a different personality measure would have provided different results. Therefore, a follow-up study that uses the Big Five model of personality to assess this same population would help to determine if part of the reason why results differed from those achieved by many past researchers could be linked to the use of a different personality test.

As a final recommendation, a longitudinal study that accounts for longer periods of time since the onset of the relationship may provide more conclusive answers about the impact of personality characteristics on relationship satisfaction over time. The 5-year time limit set for this study may not have been long enough to capture how roles are shifting and, perhaps, changing both the external and internal demands of a marriage or how the importance of certain relationship factors may dissipate over time (O'Rourke et al., 2011; Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

### **Implications**

The social implications of this study are important. Individuals who feel gratified in their relationships tend to report less stress, anxiety, and depression and increased life satisfaction. Distressed relationships have a large impact on physical and mental health (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010; Schudlich et al., 2011). Intimate relationships are a large part of society and impact how people interact with each other, work together, and engage in

recreational activities. Past researchers have linked high-quality intimate relationships with lower rates of depression and greater satisfaction with life (Saxbe & Repetti, 2010). If the goal is to lead a satisfying life with meaningful interpersonal relationships, then this study contributed some basic information on which future researchers can build and strive for a deeper understanding of the mystery that is relationship satisfaction.

Limited research was available on the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction. Studies that included these two variables and premarital education programs were not available. This study has contributed to the literature by closing the gap regarding the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop in recent years. It is thus a first step toward continued research; while overall results of this study were not statistically significant, three independent variables emerged that supported the results of existing literature and may be useful for future research: affective communication and gender, role orientation and independence, and aggression and independence. With these factors in mind, therapists, counselors, and others working with couples, may find the information provided by this study useful and note the areas of greatest influence on relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, they may recognize that personality characteristics may not always influence relationship satisfaction in persons who have attended a premarital education program similar to the one identified in this study and may, therefore, focus on other problem areas in a relationship with potentially greater impact on satisfaction.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction in adults who had attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years. The research questions were aimed at exploring the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction and the relationship among personality characteristics and further outcome variables that appear to influence satisfaction (i.e., affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction), as measured with the 16PF and the MSI-R.

Because past researchers indicated that personality characteristics may be an important part of successful and satisfying relationships, I expected the results of this study to support these findings. In the end, this study revealed that, overall, personality characteristics did not play a significant role in relationship satisfaction for individuals who attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop. However, the study did reveal that three independent variables supported the findings reported in the existing literature and may be useful for future research, namely, affective communication and gender, role orientation and independence, and aggression and independence (Caughlin et al., 2000; Gattis et al., 2004; Rosowsky et al., 2012; Shiota & Levenson, 2007). It is, therefore, recommended that further research be conducted to explore these and other related variables in hopes of identifying factors that can improve and maintain



relationship satisfaction for committed couples to benefit not only these individuals but also their families, their work relationships, and ultimately society at large.

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## Appendix A: Program Description

The Preparación de Novios weekend workshop's primary focus is to improve interpersonal relationship functioning for persons in attendance with the hope that they will use the skills learned to enhance their relationship. Secondly, the program seeks to reduce the divorce rate by providing individuals with skills to make informed decisions regarding long-term commitment. One of the last goals is to help form positive nuclear families, which stems from the belief that children benefit most from a two-parent household. The weekend workshop is conducted in Spanish and provides reading materials in both English and Spanish to accommodate reading preference. Persons in attendance participate in the weekend workshop with their significant other and or spouse for those legally married but not yet married through the Catholic Church. Although the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop served persons of all denominations, the weekend workshop content was pre-approved by the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church of Pima County, in Tucson, Arizona and functions as a program under his direction. Several referral methods are used to attract participants; word of mouth from those who have previously attended the weekend workshop, clergy, pastors, and or counselors familiar with or have knowledge of the program.

The Preparación de Novios weekend workshop is held in a conference room in a central location of downtown Tucson, AZ. The facilitators of the weekend workshop also serve as program coordinators, a married couple of 40 years. On average, Four to six weekend workshops are held each year, depending on the number of interested applicants.

Initially, persons interested in participating in the weekend workshop contact the program coordinators via telephone. The interested party is given information about the weekend workshop, and is queried about their interpersonal relationship. The application and written program description and expectations, are mailed or delivered in person to those interested in attending.

Each day of the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop is divided into different discussion sessions that addressed numerous topics important to healthy interpersonal relationship functioning. All of the discussion sessions consist of educational materials, personal life examples provided by the facilitators and songs that related to the topic discussed.

After the discussion session, each person is given a series of questions and is asked to independently write a response for each question. When responding to individual questions, each person is asked to do so with a physical distance from their significant other. Once each person answers the questions, each person is asked to re-group with their significant other and exchange their written responses with each other. After each person reads their partner's responses, they discussed the responses, particularly those responses that are different or express different thoughts and beliefs. The participants are encouraged to discuss only their personal feelings regarding the response without rebuttal, blaming, or attempting to change their partner's answers. In addition to discussions, the Preparación de Novios workshop provides examples of ways to introduce romance into the interpersonal relationships. Meals prepared for couples are often in a romantic setting that encourages conversation, and focus on each other.

The first day of the weekend workshop initiates on Saturday morning at 9:00 am and concludes at approximately 9:00 pm. The day activities are as follows: 1) the facilitators introduce themselves and provide participants with personal information regarding length of time married, children, grandchildren and qualifications to teach the weekend workshop; 2) an outline of the programs activities, rules and expectations are given to all in attendance; 3) the first topic, In understanding myself I can love you more (the title has been translated to English from Spanish.) the purpose of the discussion is to help participants understand their own strengths and limitations and to accept that their significant other has their own strengths and limitations. Additionally, this discussion encourages each person to recall why they began dating and to establish that in marriage there will be highs and lows. Tools are given to participants that may improve their skills in this area; 4) the second discussion topic, Expectations (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on defining expectations, and encourages each participant to openly and clearly communicate their own expectations of the relationship to their significant other; 5) the third discussion topic, Decisions and Responsibilities in marriage (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on helping participants understand how to make joint decisions based on what is best for the relationship. Additionally, the discussion reveals the importance of sharing household responsibilities; 6) the fourth discussion topic, Marital Unity (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on helping participants understand that obtaining Unity is more important than seeking happiness; 7) the fifth discussion topic, Sex in Marriage (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on instructing participants on the

difference between sex and intimacy; 8) the first day concludes with a romantic dinner. The facilitators surprise the participants with a romantic setting for dinner and encourage each participant to enjoy the time with their significant other. At the end of the first day, participants go home.

The second day of the workshop initiates on Sunday morning at 9:00 am and concludes at 5:00 pm. The day activities are as follows: 1) the first discussion topic of day two, Fighting, forgiveness and healing (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on giving participants rules for fighting fair and understanding how to give and ask for permission and its relationship to healing; 2) the second discussion topic for day two, The Sacrament of Marriage (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on what makes marriage a sacrament and how to live the sacrament daily; 3) the third discussion topic for day two, Family Values (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) focuses on identifying personal values and their impact on interpersonal relationships. Participants are encouraged to formulate a set of values for their relationship with their significant other; 4) the fourth discussion topic for day two, Children are a gift (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) encourages each participant to discuss their hopes and expectations regarding children, child rearing and parenting; 5) an activity, How much do we know about each other (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) provides participants an opportunity to discuss what they actually know about their significant other; 6) the fifth discussion topic for day two, Commitment (the title has been translated to English from Spanish) encourages participants to discuss long term commitments and compromise; 7)

Participants are given a homework assignment. Each participant is encouraged to write a letter to their significant other about a troubling issue or issues that may be difficult for them to discuss with their significant other. They are encouraged to schedule a time, approximately a week from the date of the weekend workshop, with their significant other to read and discuss the content of each other's letters. Once participants set a date, they write it down on the facilitator's log. Additionally, participants are given the option to contact the facilitators after the scheduled date with their significant other to ask questions or advise of their progress. The weekend workshop concludes with a prayer service and distribution of attendance certificates.



## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Hello, my name is Rosalba Mada, M.Ed, I am a clinical psychology graduate student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study that will look at the relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction for adults who attended the Preparación de Novios, weekend workshop with (*program coordinators name*), within the last five years.

Since you attended the program within this timeframe, I am inviting you to participate in the research study. Those who agree to participate and return all the completed forms will be given a \$25.00 gift certificate to a restaurant as a thank you for your time.

The study consists of filling out and returning the enclosed postcard noting agreement to participate, or by informing of agreement at [www.rmadastudy.com](http://www.rmadastudy.com). After which a packet will be mailed out, with a demographic questionnaire, the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-R. You will be asked to completely fill out each questionnaire and once the forms are completed, return them in the self-addressed pre-paid envelope provided. In all, it should take approximately one - two hours to complete.

Although the results will be used for the research study, all personal identifying information will be kept private. For any questions, concerns, or request for research results, I may be contacted at, [\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*@waldenu.edu](mailto:*****@waldenu.edu), [www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*com](http://www.*****com), or [\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*](tel:*****). In advance I thank you for your participation.

Respectfully,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed

Clinical psychology graduate student

#### Invitation to Participate (Spanish)

Hola, mi nombre es Rosalba Mada, M.Ed. Soy estudiante en Walden University en donde busco obtener mi doctorado en Psicología Clínica. Estoy conduciendo una encuesta que examinara la relación entre características de personalidad y satisfacción en la relación romántica para personas que han asistido a la Preparación de Novios con (*program coordinators name*), en los últimos cinco años.

Tengo entendido que Ud. participo en el programa dentro del tiempo que busco estudiar. Es por esto que le extiendo esta invitación a participar el la encuesta. A las personas que acepten participar y regresen los cuestionarios completos, se les dará un certificado de \$25.00 a un restaurante, en agradecimiento por su tiempo y participación.

La encuesta requiere ciertos pasos. Primeramente debe llenar y regresar la forma que viene junto con esta carta, indicando su aceptación de participar en la encuesta o puede aceptar por medio del sitio de internet [www.rmadastudy.com](http://www.rmadastudy.com) mandando un correo electrónico. Al aceptar la participación, se le mandara un sobre con tres cuestionarios y una lista de restaurantes de los cuales puede escoger su certificado de \$25.00. El ultimo paso es llenar los cuestionarios por completo y regresarlos en el sobre proveído. En total debe tomar aproximadamente de una a dos horas para llenar los cuestionarios.

Su información personal se mantendrá privada y no se usara para reportar los resultados obtenidos en la encuesta. Si tiene alguna pregunta o duda, o le gustaría obtener los resultados al concluir la encuesta, me puede localizar por medio de correo electrónico a \*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu, atreves del sitio de internet www.\*\*\*\*\*.com o por teléfono al \*\*\*\*\*. Le agradezco mucho su consideración y apoyo para desempeñar mi encuesta.

Sinceramente,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed

Clinical psychology graduate student

## Appendix C: Postcard to Accept Participation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, I agree to participate in the research study  
*SI, Me gustaría participar en el estudio.*

I prefer written material in / *Prefiero materiales escritos en:*  
\_\_\_\_\_ English / *Inglés* \_\_\_\_\_ Spanish / *Español*

Or you can submit your response at [www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.com](http://www.*****.com).

*O puede someter su respuesta en [www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.com](http://www.*****.com).*

## Appendix D: Directions for Completing and Returning Questionnaires

Please assure that the packet includes the following:

1. Demographic Questionnaire
2. 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition
3. Marital Satisfaction Inventory- R
4. Restaurant List
5. Resource List (for your records)

### Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete the Demographic Questionnaire by reading each question and answering as is most appropriate for you.

### 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition (16PF)

Please complete the 16PF by reading each question and completely filling in the circle that best represents your answer. Fill in only one circle per question. You may use any color pen or pencil.

### Marital Satisfaction Inventory – R (MSI-R)

Please complete the MSI-R by reading each question and completely filling in the circle that best represents your answer. Fill in only one circle per question. You may use any color pen or pencil.

### Restaurant List

From the list of restaurants please mark your preference.

In the pre-paid, self-addressed envelope, please return the:

1. Completed Demographic Questionnaire
2. Completed 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition
3. Completed Marital Satisfaction Inventory-R
4. Restaurant List

For any questions, concerns, or request for research results, I may be reached at  
 \*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu, www.\*\*\*\*\*.com or \*\*\*\*\*.

Thank You,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.

Clinical psychology graduate student

#### Directions for Completing and Returning Questionnaires (Spanish)

Por favor asegure que el sobre incluya lo siguiente:

1. Cuestionario Personal
2. 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition
3. Marital Satisfaction Inventory- R
4. Lista de Restaurantes
5. Lista de Referencias (Ud. Se queda con ella)

#### Cuestionario Personal

Favor de llenar por complete el cuestionario personal. Lea y conteste cada pregunta de la manera que mejor lo(a) describa.

#### 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition (16PF)

Favor de llenar por complete el 16PF. Lea cada pregunta y llene por complete el circulo que mejor represente su respuesta. Solo llene un circulo por pregunta. Puede usar lápiz o pluma para contestar el cuestionario.

#### Marital Satisfaction Inventory – R (MSI-R)

Favor de llenar por complete el MSI-R. Lea cada pregunta y llene por complete el circulo que mejor represente su respuesta. Solo llene un circulo por pregunta. Puede usar lápiz o pluma para contestar el cuestionario.

Lista de Restaurantes

De la lista de restaurants por favor indique su preferido.

En el sobre que viene rotulado con estampilla por favor regrese los próximos:

1. Cuestionario Personal completado
2. 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire Fifth Edition
3. Marital Satisfaction Inventory-R completado
4. Lista de Restaurantes

Si tiene alguna pregunta o duda me puede localizar por correo electrónico al \*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu, por medio del sitio de internet www.\*\*\*\*\*.com o por teléfono al \*\*\*\*\*.

Gracias,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.

Clinical psychology graduate student

## Appendix E: Demographics Survey

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For the following questions, please circle the answer that best describes you.

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity: Caucasian Hispanic/Latino African American Native American

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Age: 18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 50 51 – 80 81 +

How long ago did you attended the Preparación de Novios Weekend Workshop with  
(*program coordinators names*) ?

0 – 2 yrs 3-4 yrs 5-6 yrs 7-8 yrs 9 + yrs

How long have you been in a relationship with your current partner?

0 – 5 yrs 6 – 10 yrs 11 – 20 yrs 21 – 30 yrs 31 + yrs

Did you attend the Preparación de Novios Weekend Workshop with your current  
partner? YES NO



**ENCUESTA PERSONAL**

---

Para las próximas respuestas, circule las respuestas que mejor lo(a) describan.

Genero: Masculino Femenino

Edad: 18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 50 51 – 80 81 +

Perfil racial: Anglo Hispano/Latino Afro/Americano Indio Nativo

Otro \_\_\_\_\_

Hace cuanto tiempo asistió a la Preparación de Novios con (*program coordinators names*)?

0 – 2 años 3-4 años 5-6 años 7-8 años 9 + años

Cuanto tiempo tiene con su pareja?

0 – 5 años 6-10 años 11-20 años 21-30 años 31 + años

Asistió a la Preparación de Novios con su pareja de hoy? SI NO

## Appendix F: Resource List

The following is a list of agencies in Tucson, AZ, that may provide individual, marital, family and / or group counseling.

*La siguiente es una lista de agencias en Tucson, AZ, que son proveedores de consejería individual, matrimonial, familiar o en grupo.*

1. Cactus Counseling Assoc  
110 S. Church Ave, Suite # 2070  
Tucson, AZ 85701  
(520) 798-3659
  
2. Catholic Social Services of Southern Arizona  
140 W. Speedway, Suite # 230  
Tucson, AZ 85705  
(520) 623 – 0344
  
3. Counseling & Consulting Services  
2430 E. 6<sup>th</sup> St  
Tucson, AZ 85719  
(520) 882 – 0090
  
4. La Paloma Counseling  
310 S. Williams Blvd  
Tucson, AZ 85711  
(520) 514-2000
  
5. Presidio Counseling Inc.  
2224 N. Craycroft Rd. Suite # 100  
Tucson, AZ 85712  
(520) 514-2211
  
6. SAMHC Behavioral Health Services  
2502 N. Dodge Blvd Suite # 190  
Tucson, AZ 85716  
(520) 704-6956

## Appendix G: Restaurant List

A \$25.00 gift certificate will be mailed upon receipt of the completed questionnaire.  
*Un certificado de \$25.00 se le enviara al recibir los cuestionarios completos.*

Please choose one  
*Por favor eliga uno.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Applebees
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Olive Garden
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Red Lobster
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Claim Jumper
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Buffalo Wild Wings
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Chili's
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7 Macaroni Grill
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. On the Border
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Cheesecake Factory
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. California Pizza
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. P.F. Changs
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Panda Express
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Texas Roadhouse
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Outback Steakhouse
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Pei Wei
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Cracker Barrel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Red Robin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Mimi's Cafe
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Rubio's
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Subways

## Appendix H: Letter Requesting that Questionnaires be Returned

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
P.O. Box \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*, AZ \*\*\*\*\*

Date

(Name of Participant):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I understand that it can be time consuming and appreciate your time. In order to continue with my study I need your completed questionnaires. If you could please return the completed demographic questionnaire, 16PF, MSI-R, and the list of restaurants with your choice indicated, in the self-addressed stamped envelope that was provided as soon as possible. Once I receive all the completed forms, I will send to you the \$25.00 gift certificate for your participation.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
\*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu  
www.\*\*\*\*\*.com  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Letter Requesting that Questionnaires be Returned (Spanish)

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
P.O. Box \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*, AZ \*\*\*\*\*

Fecha

(Nombre del Participante):

Se le agradece su aceptación de participar en la encuesta. Comprendo que puede tomar de su tiempo y agradezco el tiempo que le dedicara a llenar los cuestionarios. Para poder continuar con la encuesta, necesito sus cuestionarios. Le pido que al llenar el Cuestionario Personal, el 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire y el Marital Satisfaction Inventory-R junto con la lista de restaurants, los envié en el sobre proporcionado lo antes posible. Al recibir los cuestionarios completos, le enviare su certificado para un restaurante en cantidad de \$25.00, en agradecimiento por su participación.

Muchísimas gracias por su participación.

Sinceramente,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
\*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu  
www.\*\*\*\*\*.com  
\*\*\*\*\*

Appendix I: Thank You Letter

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
P.O. Box \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*, AZ \*\*\*\*\*

Date

(Name of Participant):

Thank you for your participation in the study. I sincerely appreciate your time and effort. Enclosed is the \$25.00 gift certificate to the restaurant of your choice. Research results may be obtained once the study is completed by contacting me at the below email, website or phone number.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
\*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu  
www.\*\*\*\*\*.com  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Thank You Letter (Spanish)

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
P.O. Box \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*, AZ \*\*\*\*\*

Fecha

(Nombre del participante):

Se le agradece y se aprecia su tiempo y participación en esta encuesta. Incluido viene el certificado de \$25.00 al restaurant que eligió. Los resultados del estudio se pueden obtener al concluir la encuesta. Si le gustaría conocer los resultados me puede contactar por correo electrónico, por el sitio de internet o por teléfono.

De nuevo, gracias por su participación.

Sinceramente,

Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
\*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu  
www.\*\*\*\*\*.com  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Appendix J: Permission to Use Instruments



1/21/15

(a)

Kirsten Gobeski &lt;@ipat.com&gt;

to me

Ms. Mada,

Thank you for your interest in using the English and Spanish version of the 16PF for your research. Based on the research design, the committee has decided not to support your research financially. However, as the additional information provided for your proposed design does reflect an appropriate usage of the 16PF, we will grant your request to use the 16PF in both languages if you would like to purchase at full price. Based on your design, we suggest purchasing a data file (csv) and/or the 16PF® Couple's Counseling Report, which would provide additional information if you have the ability to match couple pairs. A data file alone is priced between \$16 to \$24 per assessment administration; these prices are dependent upon the number purchased. The Couple's Counseling Report is priced between \$38 to \$43, again dependent upon volume purchased.

I have informed our Customer Service team of your potential interest and they are familiar with your intended use of the 16PF. If you choose to proceed with this route, they can be contacted at 1-800-225-4728. I wish you the best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

**Kirsten T. Gobeski, Ph.D.**  
Senior Consulting Psychologist

o:  
p:  
c:  
w: [www.ipat.com](http://www.ipat.com)





1/28/15

(b)

to me, rights

Hello Rosalba,

WPS is pleased to offer to you a Research Discount for the purchase of the MSI-R materials needed for use in conducting the indicated scholarly study. See attached for:

- Guidelines on placing an order with WPS.
- WPS Order Form.
- A Memo of Discount Authorization; use of the discount indicates agreement to its terms; please provide a copy of the discount memo when placing the order. If placing the order by phone, please refer to its discount code \*\*\*\*\* and customer # \*\*\*\*\*.

NOTE: If you have any questions about pricing, placing or tracing an order please directly contact WPS Customer Service (tel: 800/648-8857 or 424/201-8800, 7:30am to 4:00pm Pacific; fax: 424/201-6950; or e-mail customerservice@wpspublish.com).

Thanks for your research interest in our material.

Best wishes for a successful project--

Sincerely,

[Sandra I. Ceja](#)

Rights & Permissions Specialist

[www.wpspublish.com](http://www.wpspublish.com)

[www.creativetherapystore.com](http://www.creativetherapystore.com)

wps

[unlocking potential](#)

The information contained in or transmitted with this e-mail may be privileged and/or confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, you are advised that any dissemination or use of this communication is strictly prohibited.



11/15/14

(a)

Rosalba Mada &lt;@waldenu.edu&gt;

to gpower-feedback

To whom it may concern:

My name is Rosalba Mada, M.Ed., a graduate student at Walden University. I would like to obtain permission to use the attached plot graph that I formulated using the G\*Power 3 software in my doctoral dissertation. Please let me know if I need to provide any further information.

Sincerely,  
 Rosalba Mada, M.Ed.  
 Clinical Psychology Graduate Student  
 Walden University  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*@waldenu.edu  
 Attachments area



11/15/14

(b) GPower Feedback &lt;gpower-feedback@uni-duesseldorf.de&gt;

to me

Hi Rosalba,

you may use the graph as intended.

Kind regards,

Axel

## Appendix K: IRB Approval



Rosalba Mada &lt;&gt;

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**IRB Materials Approved - Rosalba Mada**

3 messages

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**IRB <>**

Wed, Jul 22, 2015 at 2:37 PM

To

Dear Ms. Mada,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "The relationship between personality characteristics and relationship satisfaction of individuals who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop within the last 5 years."

Your approval # is 07-22-15-0112821. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on July 21, 2016. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden website: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKImdiQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKImdiQ_3d_3d)

Sincerely,

Libby Munson

Office address for Walden University:

100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900

Minneapolis, MN 55401

Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link: <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

### Appendix L: Description of the Study

This nonexperimental quantitative study will examine the relationship between the independent variables, personality characteristics, time since attending the weekend workshop, ethnicity, gender, and age; on the dependent variables, relationship satisfaction, affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction. The first independent variable will be identified with the use of the 16PF. A demographic questionnaire consisting of six interval level responses will be used to identify the independent variables. The level of relationship satisfaction will be obtained using the global dissatisfaction scales of the MSI-R. The scores of the eight subscales of the MSI-R will be used to obtain scores for the corresponding dependent variables: affective communication, role orientation, problem-solving communication, aggression, family history of distress, time together, disagreement about finances, and sexual dissatisfaction.

Data will be collected from individuals who have attended the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop in the Southwestern United States within the past five years. The population for this study will consist of persons of primarily Hispanic background whose primary language is Spanish. The study will focus on individual responses and not couples. The participants will be of varied ethnicities, ages, and both genders, as well as varied length of time since they attended the weekend workshop. Descriptive statistics will be reported on these variables.

Prospective participants will be recruited by mail, using a database of those who have attended, provided by the Preparación de Novios weekend workshop program coordinators. A brief description of the study will be given to all participants.