



Personality, similarity, and marital satisfaction: Assessing a new tool

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Introduction

Whether similarity in personality has an impact on marital satisfaction is still a matter of debate.

To address this question, we used a holistic measure of personality, which allows us to give a different definition of similarity than proposed in previous researches.

Second, by collecting self and other reported data from both partners of 174 couples, we explore different indices of similarity.

Results show that similarity in other-reported data predicts a better satisfaction. Finally, we suggest that conceiving personality in a less fragmentary way than it has been made over the past century could offer new ways to explore partner's similarity.

Material and method

Participants

The sample was composed of 106 married (mean age men = 46.85, $SD = 11.52$; mean age women = 44.56, $SD = 11.67$) and 62 non married couples (mean age men = 23.77, $SD = 2.97$; mean age women = 22.58, $SD = 2.55$). The non married couples were mainly young couples recruited in the University of Lausanne in the context of a Master research, whereas married couples where recruited through advertising.

Instruments

To assess satisfaction, we used the French version of the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (*DAS*: Spanier, 1976). In the other hand, a new measure of similarity was developed by using an holistic method to assess personality: *L.A.B.E.L.* (Gendre, Capel & Monod, 2002). This questionnaire, built on the functional method, allows to obtain an individual profile of personality.

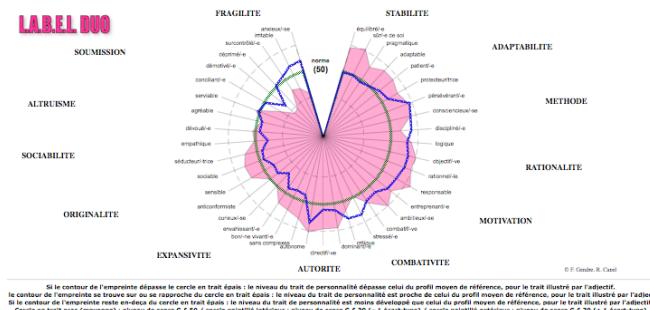
Method

All participant where assessed with the *DAS* and had to describe their personality (auto reported data) and how they imagined their partners' personality (other reported data) with *L.A.B.E.L.* On this base, we obtained two scores of convergence:

- Similarity in self description (self-self): we measure the correlation between the self evaluation of each partner (see Table 1).
- Similarity in describing ones partner's personality (other-other): we measure the correlation between the evaluation that each partner makes of his/her partner's personality (see Table 2).

Results

Figure 1. Example of a L.A.B.E.L. DUO (self-self)



L.A.B.E.L. DUO allows to superimpose descriptions of both partners. Such tool can be used in counseling with couples to identify similarities or discrepancies.

Table 1 - Similarity between self descriptions compared with similarity between other description in young non married couples

Scores of Satisfaction	Scores of convergence			
	self-self		other -other	
	r	p	r	p
Sir's Satisfaction	.013	N.S.	.320	.001
Madame's Satisfaction	.100	N.S.	.377	.003
Couple's Satisfaction	.058	N.S.	.444	.000

Results shows that similarity in the description that ones makes of his/her partner is linked with similarity in non married couples. On the other hand non significant results are found when trying to establish a link between similarity in self descriptions and satisfaction.

Table 2 - Similarity between self descriptions compared with similarity between other description in married couples

Scores of Satisfaction	Scores of convergence			
	self-self		other -other	
	r	p	r	p
Sir's Satisfaction	.291	.003	.320	.001
Madame's Satisfaction	.244	.015	.331	.001
Couple's Satisfaction	.294	.003	.361	.000

Results don't show significant difference between self-self or other-other description. Both of them are linked with satisfaction in married couples. However, other-other data seems to be more correlated to satisfaction in married couples.

Discussion

In this research, we first tried to explore a new way of conceiving similarity. As shown in Figure 1, *L.A.B.E.L.* offers a new way of describing similarity first as giving an holistic measure of personality, second by graphically allowing to superimpose descriptions given by partners. Thus, in its DUO form, *L.A.B.E.L.* could be used in the future with counseling with couples to study discrepancies and similarities in the way both partners describe themselves and the other.

The second aim of this research was to establish a link between similarity and satisfaction. Results show that in non married couples similarity in other-other description was linked with satisfaction. On the other hand, no significant difference was found between self-self and other-other description for married couples. Here we can make the hypothesis that for young non married couples, the importance of projective processes has to be seriously considered when trying to study similarity and couples' satisfaction.

References

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