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## ABSTRACT

The current trend toward increased participation of women in the work force has produced an emerging contemporary model of dual career families. Previous research about the dynamics of successful working couples has emphasized the need for an investigation of personality characteristics of such couples. Dual career couples (N=51) were separated into groups in which both partners expressed either high satisfaction or low satisfaction with the marriage. Sharp differences were seen between groups on intragroup correlations and mean differences, with the low satisfaction group partners different from each other and the high satisfaction group partners similar to each other. Females, when compared across groups, were generally similar while males were generally different. Compared to the general population, subjects were generally stable in the various personality traits regardless of marital satisfaction. The data suggest that partners involved in dual career marriages operate under interesting dynamics, indicating a need for further research. (Author/JAC)

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MARITAL SATISFACTION AND VARIOUS  
PERSONALITY FACTORS IN DUAL-CAREER MARRIAGES

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As contemporary society enters the post-industrial era, significant changes are occurring. The changes are affecting the patterning of both work and family life-styles. One of these patterns is the dual-career marriage. While this type of life-style may be a variant pattern now, given the current trends, it may become more prevalent in the future. In this post-industrial society, an emphasis in family structure is increasingly placed on partnership, an egalitarian relationship between husbands and wives, shared activities, and joint decision-making (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975). Dual-career couples, though presently a minority family life-style, express both in structure and values one variant in the making. Trist (1968) posited that new structural requirements in sociocultural norms regarding marriage were necessary. These requirements called for a more collegial type of marital partnership. Yet, there was strong resistance to value changes even though the old values were maladaptive to these new requirements. Dual-career couples illustrate this resistance on the part of society in the pattern of strains which the couple encounters in the change process.

The essence of the dual-career couple is a restructuring of traditional work roles and family functions that are distributed between partners on an equal-status basis. In an effort to define these roles, the traditional view that domestic activities are feminine in role allocation is not applicable. Rather the attempt to equalize the masculine and feminine roles as they pertain to the family is the focus of this study.

The current trend is toward increased participation of women in the work force. In the past four decades, the number of working women rose from 15% to 51% (United States Department of Labor, 1980). During the past twenty years, there has been an increasing emergence of women in the professions as reported in "Corporate Women" (Business Week, 1976). More women than ever before are assuming a significant role concurrent with that of homemaker, wife, and mother. As women continue to pursue their career ambitions across traditional role boundaries and enjoy the enrichment of their professional lives, attention should be focused on their marital relationships. These women are pursuing their career ambitions in addition to their option to marry and are expecting to combine simultaneously career and marriage. This choice is increasingly producing the emerging contemporary model of multiple-earner families known as the dual-career family (Giele, 1978).

The need for this study is supported by Holahan's statement (1979) that a "more complete understanding of the dynamics of successful functioning will require further study. Continuing work in this area should include an investigation of personality characteristics of such couples (p. 465)". Other research projects that supported a need for further study include the works of Slali (1978) on marital success and self-actualization in husbands of professional women, Goldstein (1978) on the

relationship of sex-role self-concept, attitudes toward women, job involvement and marital satisfaction in wives of dual-career couples, Holahan and Gilbert (1979) on conflict between major life roles of women and men in dual-career situations, Hall and Gordon (1973) on career choices of married women and the effects on conflict, role behavior satisfaction, Kaley (1971) on attitudes toward the dual role of the married professional woman, and Burke and Weir (1976) on personality differences between members of one career and two career families.

The purpose of this study was to discover if there was a significant relationship between the response to the 16 PF and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The hypotheses of likeness and completion as addressed by Cattell and Nesselroade (1967) will be tested. The hypothesis of likeness states that couples in stable marriages will show a similar resemblance in personality traits and those in unstable marriages will be different. Cattell and Nesselroade contend that partners generally are drawn to others of like personality traits. If this hypothesis fits our data, we would see significant positive correlations and nonsignificant mean differences between spouses on personality factors in couples with high marital satisfaction. For couples with low marital satisfaction, zero or negative correlations and significant mean differences between spouses on personality factors. The intragroup correlations for the low satisfied couples should be generally lower than those of the high satisfied (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967).

The completion hypothesis relates to partners seeking others who possess qualities that compensate for their weaknesses. An introvert, under this hypothesis, would tend to select an extrovert to marry. Although Cattell and Nesselroade did not operationally define the completion hypothesis, we define it in terms of negative correlations and significant mean differences between spouses on personality traits. The negative correlations indicate that couples generally score in the opposite direction as their spouses and the significant mean differences on personality scores indicate that spouses generally score differently from each other. If one follows the logic of this hypothesis, one sees that the completion hypothesis is essentially opposite the likeness hypothesis. Based on Cattell and Nesselroade's 1967 results, we hypothesized that couples that are high in marital satisfaction tend to follow the likeness hypothesis and couples that are low in marital satisfaction tend to follow the completion hypothesis. Comparisons of the subjects in this population (dual-career couples) to the general population on the 16 PF and comparisons of subjects of like gender across high and low satisfied couples were also investigated.

## Method

Subjects. The population for this study consisted of all women listed in the Eleventh Edition of Who's Who in American Women. A system of random numbers was used to obtain the sample. A total of 51 couples out of 78 met the deadline for returning data and constituted the final sample. The average ages of the males and females in our sample were 49.9 (S.D. = 12.7) and 47.1 (S.D. = 11.1) years respectively. The couples averaged 22 years of marriage and the percentage of those with a bachelor's, master's, Ph.D., M.D. or no degree were 20%, 35%, 6% and 4% respectively.

Instrumentation. The 16 PF is the product of twenty-five years of developmental research. Few personality measuring instruments have a more substantial scientific foundation (Buros, 1978). The 16 PF possesses a number of positive features that recommend it to test users in applied settings. The norm, reliability and established criterion relationships are good (Buros, 1978). The 16 PF provides scores on each of 16 personality traits, each of which were used as the dependent measures for this study.

The Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS), developed by Kagan (1976), was used to measure marital satisfaction. It is a self-administering scale that consists of fourteen items related to partner's commonality of interest, customary ways of settling disagreements in relation to dominance, extent to which one's relationship helps or hinders studies and professional aspirations, and a subjective estimate of an individual's overall relationship satisfaction. Eleven of the items represent modification of the Terman (1938) Index of Marital Happiness. The Coefficient Alpha calculated in this study was .81, and the total score of all the likert type items was used to classify our subjects on marital satisfaction.

## Results

To test Cattell and Nesselroade's (1967) hypothesis of likeness, the couples were classified into two groups: high satisfied couples (HI) and low satisfied couples (LO). For a couple to be classified as HI, both the male and female partners had to have scored above the median on the RSS. Partners had to score below the median on the RSS to be classified as LO. Two analyses similar to Cattell and Nesselroade's were performed. First correlations between husband and wife for each personality trait within each of the HI and LO groups were investigated. The HI partners were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) positively correlated on the two scales of O ( $r = .46$ ) and Q4 ( $r = .70$ ) and significantly negatively on the E-scale ( $r = -.56$ ). The LO partners were significantly negatively correlated on

the two scales of I ( $r = -.81$ ) and Q4 ( $r = .61$ ) and significantly positively correlated on the O-scale ( $r = .54$ ). When comparing the correlations between partners across the HI and LO groups, significant differences (using Fisher's Z-transformation and Z-test) occurred for the I (.16 vs.  $-.81$ , Q2 (.08 vs.  $-.61$ ) and Q4 (.70 vs. .03) scales. In all cases the coefficients were lower for the LO couples. Generally, the likeness hypothesis held for the HI group, but not to the extent that it held in Cattell and Nesselroade's study. The next step of the analysis was to compare couple means within each of the HI and LO groups for each personality trait. If the likeness hypothesis holds, HI couples should generally have similar scores on each scale while LO couples should be different. This hypothesis was supported because none of the mean differences between spouses were significant for the HI group, while four were used for these comparisons. The mean differences were observed for husbands and wives for the B (8.8 vs. 10.3), G (10.9 vs. 14.1), I were generally more intelligent, conscientious, tender-minded and less suspicious than their husbands.

The next set of analyses included comparing wives of HI couples to wives of LO couples and husbands of HI couples to husbands of LO couples on the 16 PF scores. Two significant differences were noted when comparing wives from HI and LO groups. These differences occurred for the C (18.1 vs. 15.4) and Q2 (11.3 vs. 13.7) scales. Wives from the HI group were more emotionally stable and group dependent than were wives from the LO group. The husbands from the HI group, however, were significantly different from the husbands in the LO group on the six scales of A (11.6 vs. 8.8), G (14.2 vs. 10.9), H (19.0 vs. 12.9), Q1 (8.7 vs. 11.1), Q2 (11.2 vs. 14.7) and Q3 (14.9 vs. 12.8). The husbands from the HI group were significantly more outgoing, conscientious, venturesome, conservative, group dependent and controlled than were the husbands from the LO group.

The last analysis was related to comparing the husband and wife 16 PF profiles to the normative profile for the general population. The comparison of the sten scores for each trait for the husbands to those of the general population showed only three husband average scores outside of the 5 to 6 stenscore average. These scores were observed for the B (sten 8), L (sten = 7) and Q2 (sten = 7). The husbands in dual-career couples were generally more intelligent, imaginative and self-sufficient than males in the general population. Wives had the four sten scores of B (sten = 8), E (sten = 7), H (sten = 7) and Q2 (sten = 7) falling outside of the 5 to 6 sten score average. Females in dual-career couples were generally more intelligent, assertive, venturesome and self-sufficient than females from the general population.



## Discussion

The likeness hypothesis appears to apply to HI couples with two of three significant correlations between husbands and wives being in the positive direction and none of the 16 mean differences between husbands and wives being significant. These results did not favor the likeness hypothesis as strongly as did Cattell and Nesselroade's data, which showed eight significant positive correlations. When comparing the between partner correlations across the groups, the likeness hypothesis was again supported with three significant differences occurring. This result compared to Cattell and Nesselroade's four differences. The likeness hypothesis does not appear to apply as strongly or as consistently to the couples in our sample of dual career couples.

The completion hypothesis holds for the LO couples with two of the three significant correlations between husbands and wives being negative and four of the 16 mean differences between husbands and wives being significant. Interestingly, the magnitudes of the significant negative correlations, (i.e.,  $-.81$  and  $-.61$ ) were substantial, and both were larger than any found by Cattell and Nesselroade. Apparently, couples from the HI group tended to rely more on spouse likenesses in spouse selection while couples from the LO group tended to rely on the spouse's potential to complement the other's weaknesses or strengths. These findings contradict those of Wilson (1978) who concluded that married career women may be in conflict with their husbands if both possess similar personality traits. In this study, HI couples were similar on personality traits.

When comparing spouses of like gender, the wives from the HI group differed on only two personality factors while the males differed between groups on six factors. These results indicate that wives, regardless of group membership, were generally similar, and that husbands were notably different across groups. Perhaps male differences contribute more to marital satisfaction of couples than do female differences.

When comparing the males and females in our sample to the general population; we found that, regardless of group membership, partners in dual career couples appear to be stable across personality traits. Only three husbands scores and four wife scores were outside the 5 to 6 sten score averages. Only one of these seven scores, wife's intelligence, was outside a sten score of 7. These findings are reasonable considering that both husbands and wives in our sample were highly educated and accomplished people.

Our study showed sharp differences between HI and LO couples on the 16 PF. It also showed that partners in dual-career marriages are stable across personality traits when compared to the general population. These data verify that partners involved in dual-career marriages operate under

interesting dynamics, and we look forward to future research on this population.

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