

Dyadic Characteristics of Individual Attributes: Attachment, Neuroticism, and Their Relation to Marital Quality and Closeness

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The present article focuses on couple types based on 2 personality traits, attachment security and neuroticism, as they relate to 2 facets of the marital relationship—a global evaluation of relationship quality and dyadic closeness—distance. The sample consisted of 248 married couples who completed measures of attachment anxiety and avoidance, neuroticism, and marital quality, as well as levels of closeness reported over 7 consecutive days. Cluster analyses yielded 3 types of dyadic attachment configurations (*secure*, *fearful avoidant*, and *insecure-mixed*) and 4 types of dyadic neuroticism (*low couple neuroticism*, *high couple neuroticism*, *wife neuroticism*, and *husband neuroticism*). Significant differences were found among attachment and neuroticism dyadic types in marital quality. The findings are discussed in terms of the viability of dyadic types based on individual traits, implying that attachment security yields itself to dyadic conceptualization more than neuroticism.

Keywords: attachment, closeness, dyadic attributes, marital quality, neuroticism

A great deal of research on the quality of marital relationships has linked marriage quality with the personality traits of the marital partners. The general notion is that one's personality may shape the way one interprets emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and interpersonal interactions. This, in turn, leads to a global perception of the dyadic relationship and marital satisfaction. In the same vein, one's evaluation of the relationship is associated with the spouse's personality. Here, too, a person perceives his or her partner's behavior and interpersonal interactions as a reflection of that partner's personality traits.

Researchers have examined the role of a number of personality traits as predictors of the marital relationship. Most often, marital quality has been associated with spouses' attachment style (see Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002, for review), neuroticism (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1991, 1997), and other Big Five personality traits (Bou-

chard, Lussier, & Sabourin, 1999; Kelly & Conley, 1987).

Thus far, most research has linked the marital relationship to each of the spouses' personality traits. However, there is reason to believe that the relationship is shaped by specific combinations of the partners' personalities. This view stems from the first tenet of systems theory, namely, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Byng-Hall, 1999). The present study deals with two constructs that have traditionally been treated as individual characteristics in relation to marital relationship: attachment security and neuroticism. We suggest that both traits be conceived as dyadic constructs and as attributes of the relationship, and we examine their relation to two aspects of the relationship: a global perception of marital quality, and emotional and physical closeness during a course of a week.

Attachment Styles: Individual and Couple Attributes

Attachment styles refer to the ways individuals regulate emotions and behaviors in their relationships with significant others (attachment figures). The study of adult attachment emerged from the work of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) on the influence of maternal care during early childhood on personality development, which suggests that, throughout their life, people look to their attachment figures for pro-

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tection, comfort, and support (Bowlby, 1988). A fundamental assumption of the theory is that individuals internalize their early experiences with caretakers by forming *internal working models* of their own self-worth and of their expectations for care and support from others. The internal working models, as cognitive–emotional schemata of one’s interpersonal world, continue to regulate one’s tendency to seek and maintain proximity to and contact with specific individuals who provide the subjective potential for physical and/or psychological safety and security (Berman, Marcus, & Berman, 1994). The implications of attachment security for *couple* relationships were initially proposed by Bowlby (1979), who argued that “there is a strong causal relationship between an individual’s experiences with his parents and his later capacity to make affectional bonds” (p. 135).

Following on Bowlby’s (1979) ideas, Hazan and Shaver (1987) demonstrated that adults in romantic relationships manifest behaviors very similar to the attachment styles (secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent) identified in childhood (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). *Secure* adults are described as being comfortable with intimacy and able to trust and depend on other people, *avoidant* people are characterized by discomfort with closeness and by difficulty in depending on others, and *anxious/ambivalent* people, whose needs for security and proximity have been responded to inconsistently during infancy and childhood, seek extreme levels of closeness and fear that they will not be loved sufficiently.

In a later theoretical development, Bartholomew (1990) proposed a two-dimensional model of adult attachment composed of four attachment styles, based on the intersection of positive and negative models of self and others. Two attachment styles are characterized by a positive model of others, but they differ in their model of self. Secure people, who have positive models of both the self and others, regard others as generally well intentioned and perceive themselves as the kind of person toward whom others are likely to respond in a helpful way (Feeney & Noller, 1991). In contrast, preoccupied people (an attachment style that corresponds to the ambivalent style in Hazan & Shaver’s, 1987, model) have a negative model of self and are characterized by a feeling of unworthiness and a constant desire to gain others’ affection.

The other two types in Bartholomew’s (1990) model have a negative model of others and are therefore characterized by their avoidance of close relationships. *Fearful avoidant* individuals develop neg-

ative models of both the self and others. They desire social contact and intimacy but experience a fear of rejection. To prevent the possibility of rejection, they avoid situations and relationships in which they perceive themselves as being vulnerable to rejection. *Dismissing avoidant* individuals, conversely, develop positive models of the self and therefore perceive social contact and intimacy as unnecessary.

The attachment perspective provides a theory-based explanation of individual differences in specific relationship behaviors and in individuals’ perceptions of their relationship quality (Feeney, 2002). Ample evidence has been accumulated regarding the association between adults’ attachment patterns and the quality of their relationships (see Mikulincer et al., 2002, for a review). Overall, research has shown a close association between secure attachment and relationship satisfaction: A person’s report of marital satisfaction is significantly associated with his or her attachment security as well as with that of the partner’s (Berman et al., 1994; Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Davila & Bradbury, 2001; Davila, Bradbury & Fincham, 1998; Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999; Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Mayseless, 1995).

Although research has traditionally examined differences in relationship satisfaction among *individuals* with different attachment patterns, attachment security may be a characteristic of the *relationship*. The stand supporting that attachment security is an attribute of the relationship is based on a systemic view according to which partners provide the environment for one another, thus, mutually affecting each other. Furthermore, attachment theory addresses the mechanism by which incoming information from the partner is processed and responded to emotionally and behaviorally: “An attachment perspective can organize the emotional process within each person, person’s interpretation of their partners’ behavior, persons’ reciprocal impact on one another, and the disruption of the couple’s fit” (Pistole, 1994, p. 157).

Mikulincer et al. (2002) proposed a systemic model of the associations between both partners’ attachment security and their relationship satisfaction. According to this model, the marital relationship is linked to both partners’ attachment security. First, marital interactions are patterned along intrapsychic and interpersonal regularities related to each partner’s sense of attachment security. Second, the association between the attachment security in one individual and his or her marital cognitions and behaviors depends in part on the attachment security of both partners.

The assessment of attachment at the dyadic level involves the unique nature of particular combinations of attachment styles of both partners. A number of studies have examined the joint effects of both partners' attachment styles. Most often, three broad categories have been considered: *secure couples*, in which both partners are securely attached; *insecure couples*, in which both partners are categorized into insecure attachment types (anxious/preoccupied, dismissing avoidant, fearful avoidant); and *mixed couples*, in which one spouse is securely attached and the other is insecure (Feeney, 2003). Applying this type of classification, researchers have found that couples in which both partners were securely attached reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than those in which one or both partners were identified as avoidant or anxious/ambivalent (Collins & Read, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994). Senchak and Leonard (1992) found that secure couples showed better adjustment than other couples in terms of self-reports of marital intimacy, couple relationship functioning, and partner's responses to conflicts, whereas mixed couples were similar to insecure couples, regardless of gender differences.

The sense of attachment security of both partners may also influence variations and changes in their daily physical and emotional closeness. In their daily life, couples negotiate issues related to distance regulation, such as "how much closeness are we comfortable with; how available and accessible will we be for each other" (Pistole, 1994, p. 155). Pistole contended that attachment theory addresses the meaning and purpose of closeness–distance movements and may be useful for the understanding of persons' interpretation of their partner's behavior and the partners' reciprocal impact on one another. She suggested that two securely attached partners would not generally become involved in distance antagonism (unless one partner faces a stressful condition, which might temporarily challenge the closeness–distance balance of both partners); in contrast, distance struggle is likely to manifest itself as a major problem in the relationship when one partner operates out of an avoidant attachment style and the other functions from a preoccupied style.

Thus far, only limited research has been conducted to examine variations in couples' closeness–distance. In one of a few studies, Feeney (1999) found that differences in dating partners' needs for closeness–distance were predicted by gender and by attachment style of both partners. More specifically, conflicts over closeness–distance were linked with attachment insecurity, especially men's dismissing avoidance.

Feeney's findings highlight the need to consider both gender and attachment style differences in explaining conflicts over closeness and distance.

In the present study, we examine partners' perceived closeness over the course of a week. We expect that husbands and wives in secure couples will report more closeness than partners in couples in which one or both partners are insecurely attached.

Neuroticism: Individual Traits and Couples' Attributes

Neuroticism is a personality trait defined by a general negative emotionality and a reduced positive emotionality in positive contexts (Keltner, 1996). It is characterized by negative affectivity and emotional instability (Bouchard et al., 1999) and is considered to involve a predisposition for negative feelings, such as distress, frustration, anxiety, and guilt (Costa & McCrae, 1980). Neuroticism was found to be negatively associated with various measures of marital adjustment (Buss, 1991; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Kurdek, 1997; Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004). Furthermore, there is ample evidence regarding the effect of both spouses' levels of neuroticism on each other's perceptions of marital quality (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995, 1997; Kurdek, 1991).

Previous research has shown that level of neuroticism is the most consistent and powerful personality predictor of relationship outcomes (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Both husbands' and wives' neuroticism was found to relate negatively to their spouse's marital adjustment (Buss, 1991; Geist & Gilbert, 1996; King, 1993; Long & Andrews, 1990; Richmond, Craig, & Ruzicka, 1991; Russell & Wells, 1994).

For the most part, neuroticism has been treated as an individual characteristic in predicting the marital relationship. We are not aware of research examining the marital relation with regard to neuroticism as a *dyadic* construct. Yet the same logic arguing for the dyadic nature of attachment style as an attribute of the couple holds here: Spouses provide for each other the environment in which they operate. If one spouse is characterized by a high level of neuroticism, it is likely that everything in his or her environment—including marital events, the partner, and marital interactions—will be colored by negative emotionality (Keltner, 1996). At the same time, the other spouse may be characterized by a similar or different level of neuroticism. Because spouses react to each other's behaviors, the relationship is shaped not only

by the level of neuroticism of each partner but by the *joint effect* of both personalities.

Theoretically, relationships may be characterized by three broad types of dyadic-level neuroticism: High neuroticism (both spouses characterized by high level of neuroticism), low neuroticism (both spouses characterized by low levels of neuroticism), or mixed (one spouse characterized by a high level and the other by a low level of neuroticism). In the present study, we explore the ways marital quality and closeness are related to different types of dyadic-level neuroticism.

Methodological Considerations

Researchers have examined the effects of both spouses' personality traits on their relationship in a number of ways. Most frequently, measures of both spouses' traits were included in multivariate models predicting marital satisfaction, adjustment, or quality (Bouchard et al., 1999; Davila et al., 1998, 1999; Feeney, 1996; Lussier, Sabourin, & Turgeon, 1997). A second approach used by researchers for assessing the effects of both spouses' attachment style on their relationship has been to classify individuals according to attachment types and then construct couple types on the basis of the individual attachment types: both spouses endorsed secure attachment, both spouses endorsed insecure attachment types (avoidant or anxious/ambivalent), or the spouses had mixed attachment types (Senchak & Leonard, 1992; Volling, Notaro, & Larsen, 1998). Such models take into account the joint effects of both spouses on one's own and on the other spouse's perceived relationship quality. Yet these studies still consider personality traits to be characteristics of the individuals involved and overlook different configurations of insecure attachment, such as avoidant and preoccupied.

In the present study, we take a different approach to assessing the relations between personality traits and marital quality. More specifically, we build on the dimensional approach for the conceptualization and measurement of adult attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) to construct dyadic-level attachment types. We apply the same approach to construct dyadic-level neuroticism and classify couples accordingly.

Method

Participants

The sample for the present study is part of a larger project on cross-cultural aspects of emotional transmission in cou-

ples. In the first stage of the project, a representative sample of 1,000 individuals (303 Arab and 697 Jewish Israeli respondents) was drawn by means of a computerized random telephone dialing, and respondents were interviewed by telephone (see Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2003, for details). From the original sample, a random subsample of 200 Jewish and 100 Arab respondents were contacted and invited to participate in subsequent stages of the project. The number of Arab respondents was somewhat inflated relative to their proportion in Israel's population (19%) to enable appropriate statistical analyses within that group. Participants were included in the second stage if both spouses were willing to take part in the research. In the present study, we randomly selected a subsample of couples with a proportion of Jews and Arabs similar to their proportion in Israeli society. Thus, the present study is based on data from 248 couples (both husbands and wives) who had complete data in all variables.

Partners had been living together for an average of 16.8 years ($SD = 10.7$). The number of children per couple ranged from 1 to 12, with an average of 2.7 ($SD = 1.6$). The age of women ranged from 20 to 64 years, with an average age of 39.8 ($SD = 10.0$). The age of men ranged from 22 to 73 years, with an average age of 43.1 ($SD = 10.7$). The average educational level was 14.1 years ($SD = 3.1$) for women and 13.91 years ($SD = 3.4$) for men.

Analyses for differences between this subsample ($N = 248$) and the original sample ($N = 1,000$) indicated that men in the subsample were slightly older than those in the original sample, $t(1, 246) = 1.96, p = .05$, and that couples had been married for a little longer, $t(1, 246) = 2.07, p < .05$. No differences were found in any other background variables (women's age, men's and women's educational level, levels of religiosity, number of children in the family, and family income).

Procedure and Instruments

Trained interviewers visited the couples in their home and administered the questionnaires to each partner. Interviewers remained in the home while the questionnaires were being completed to ensure that the spouses answered the questions independently.

Neuroticism was measured by the Neuroticism subscale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire—Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). The Neuroticism subscale includes 12 items with a yes/no option. The score is the total of the affirmative answers, with scores thereby ranging between 0 and 12. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .84 for men and .80 for women.

Attachment was measured by the Experience in Close Relationships (ECR) questionnaire (Brennan et al., 1998). The ECR assesses two dimensions of adult attachment in the context of close (couple) relationships: (a) avoidance of intimacy (e.g., "I get uncomfortable when my partner wants to be very close"), and (b) anxiety about rejection and abandonment (e.g., "I worry about being abandoned"). Each

scale contains 18 items, which are evaluated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. In the present study, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the ECR Avoidance and Anxiety scales were .79 for husbands and .85 for wives.

Marital quality was measured by a modified version of the short Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication, and Happiness (ENRICH) scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). The original instrument is a 10-item Likert-type scale that assesses the respondent's perceived quality of his or her marriage across 10 dimensions of the relationship. Fowers and Olson (1993) reported good reliability estimates of the short ENRICH scale as well as high concurrent and predictive validity. In the modified Hebrew version (Lavee, 1995), items and response categories were adapted to decrease the response set. Instead of the original Likert-type scale, in which items are ranked between *fully agree* and *fully disagree*, each item is given two extreme response categories, and the respondent is asked to check a number on a scale ranging between these responses (e.g., "When we have conflicts or disagreements—[1] We always come to an agreement . . . [7] We seldom are able to bridge our differences"). Scales of this type (see, e.g., Antonovsky, 1987) are less affected by social desirability than the typical Likert-type scale. Indeed, the modified version was found to correlate only modestly ($r = .16$) with a social desirability scale (Lavee, 1995). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were .82 for husbands and .83 for wives.

Daily closeness was measured as part of a daily diary self-report questionnaire that respondents completed over a period of 7 consecutive days. For each day, closeness was measured by four items on which respondents reported to what extent they *wished* to have physical closeness and emotional closeness to their partner (e.g., "To what extent have you felt today a need for physical closeness to your spouse?") and the extent to which there *actually was* physical and emotional closeness on that day (e.g., "To what extent was there an emotional closeness between the two of you?"). Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not at all* to *very much*. A closeness score for each day was calculated as the mean of the four item scores. In the present study, the closeness score is an average of the scores across the 7 days.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the study variables as well as paired correlations and differences between husbands and wives. As shown in Table 1, there were significant correlations between spouses in all variables. Wives scored significantly higher on neuroticism and on anxiety. In contrast, husbands scored higher on avoidance and on perceived closeness. Husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality were significantly correlated ($r = .51$), with no significant difference found between their evaluations.

Creation of Dyadic Measures

Dyadic attachment patterns. To create a dyadic variable of attachment, we conducted a cluster analysis on husbands' and wives' attachment dimensions—avoidance and anxiety. More specifically, we conducted an agglomerative hierarchical clustering procedure with squared euclidean distance and a between-groups linkage. The agglomeration schedule indicated that three clusters best accounted for the data, with the agglomeration coefficients significantly decreased afterward. We then conducted a multivariate analysis of variance with a post hoc test for differences among clusters in husbands' and wives' avoidance and anxiety. To increase our confidence in the findings, we set the significance level for the post hoc analyses at $p < .01$. The findings (see Table 2) revealed that the three types of dyadic attachment were characterized by a *secure couple* type, in which both spouses had low scores on anxiety and avoidance, and by two insecure types: (a) *fearful avoidant*, in which both spouses had high scores on anxiety and avoidance, and (b) *insecure-mixed*, in which one spouse scored low on anxiety

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Husbands ($n = 248$)		Wives ($n = 248$)		r	$t(247)$
	M	SD	M	SD		
Attachment avoidance	3.27	0.85	2.87	0.93	.26**	5.90**
Attachment anxiety	3.09	1.00	3.44	1.05	.30**	-4.56**
Neuroticism	4.13	3.39	5.78	3.24	.16*	-6.04**
Marital quality	5.62	0.89	5.60	0.95	.51**	0.32
Closeness	3.04	0.71	2.95	0.71	.74**	2.64**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance for Husbands and Wives in Three Couple Attachment Types

Variable	Secure (<i>n</i> = 97)		Fearful avoidant (<i>n</i> = 72)		Mixed (<i>n</i> = 79)		<i>F</i> (2, 245)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Male anxiety	2.65 _a	0.86	4.02 _b	0.72	2.78 _a	0.84	67.01***
Male avoidance	3.01 _a	0.82	3.83 _b	0.68	3.11 _a	0.82	25.27***
Female anxiety	2.44 _a	0.49	4.01 _b	0.86	4.15 _b	0.68	174.99***
Female avoidance	2.36 _a	0.75	3.72 _c	0.76	2.71 _b	0.73	71.06***

Note. Means within each row whose subscripts differ are different at $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

and high on avoidance (dismissing avoidant) and the other spouse scored high on anxiety and low on avoidance (preoccupied).

To validate this classification, we conducted a correspondence analysis by using both spouses' attachment styles, as shown in Figure 1. As Figure 1 shows, the correspondence analysis map is clearly divided into three areas that resemble the three groups described above: both spouses having secure attachment style, both spouses having fearful avoidant attachment style, and a mix of attachment styles (preoccupied and dismissing avoidant) for husband and wife.

Dyadic patterns of neuroticism. To create a dyadic variable of neuroticism, we conducted a cluster analysis on husbands' and wives' neuroticism. More specifically, we conducted an agglomerative hierarchical clustering procedure with squared euclidean

distance and a between-groups linkage. The agglomeration schedule indicated that four clusters best accounted for the data, with the agglomeration coefficients significantly decreased afterward. We then conducted a multivariate analysis of variance with post hoc tests for differences among clusters in husbands' and wives' neuroticism. To increase our confidence in the findings, we set the significance level for the post hoc analyses at $p < .01$. The findings (see Table 3) indicated that the four types of dyadic neuroticism were characterized as follows: (a) *low neuroticism* (both spouses had low scores on neuroticism), (b) *wife's neuroticism* (the wife scored high and the husband scored low on neuroticism), (c) *husband's neuroticism* (the husband scored high and the wife scored low on neuroticism), and (d) *high neuroticism* (both spouses had high scores on neuroticism).

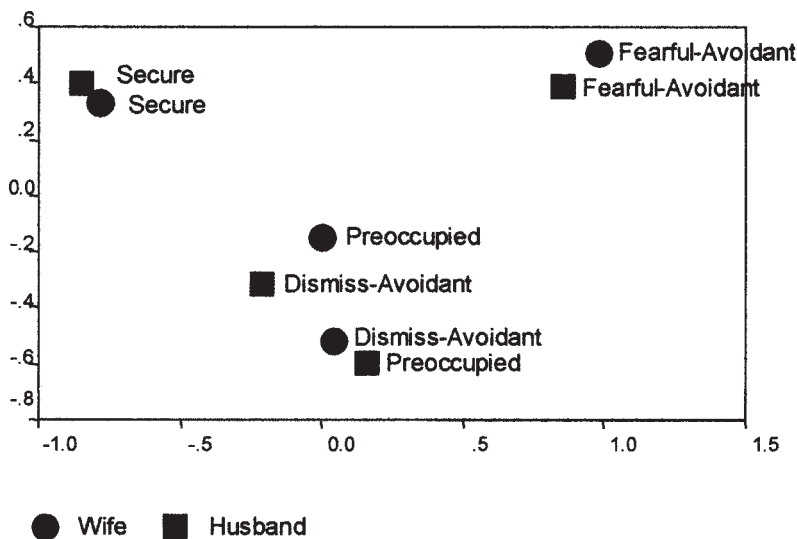


Figure 1. Correspondence analysis of husbands' and wives' attachment types.

Table 3

Husbands' and Wives' Levels of Neuroticism in Four Couple Types

Variable	Both low (<i>n</i> = 73)		Wife high– husband low (<i>n</i> = 77)		Husband high– wife low (<i>n</i> = 62)		Both high (<i>n</i> = 36)		<i>F</i> (3, 244)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Husband neuroticism	1.59 _a	1.31	1.99 _a	1.55	7.00 _b	1.90	8.92 _c	2.03	261.72***
Wife neuroticism	2.86 _a	1.46	8.31 _b	1.76	3.82 _a	1.78	9.64 _c	1.87	218.62***

Note. Means within each row whose subscripts differ are different at $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Marital Relationships and Dyadic Patterns of Attachment and Neuroticism

To examine how marital relationships differ between the dyadic patterns of attachment and neuroticism, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance of male and female perceived marital quality and closeness. For both attachment and neuroticism dyadic types, we first conducted a multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures to account for husbands' and wives' dependent observations. Second, to examine differences among types in marital quality and closeness, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance with post hoc tests, setting the level of significance at $p < .01$. The findings are presented in Tables 4 and 5, respectively.

Attachment types. The multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures showed no significant gender effect, $F(1, 245) = 0.221$, with a significant attachment type effect, $F(2, 245) = 12.030$, $p < .01$, and an interaction effect of gender and attachment type, $F(2, 245) = 4.576$, $p < .01$. As Table 4 shows, significant differences were found among types in both husbands' and wives' perceived marital quality. In secure couples, both spouses reported high levels of marital quality, whereas in fearful avoidant couples, both spouses reported low levels of marital quality. Among couples in insecure–mixed type, hus-

bands reported a high level of marital quality similar to those in secure couples, but no difference was found between wives' perception of marital quality in the insecure–mixed group and in the other two groups.

With respect to felt closeness, the analysis of variance indicated both gender, $F(1, 233) = 7.151$, $p < .01$, and attachment type effects, $F(2, 233) = 3.925$, $p < .05$, but no significant interaction effect, $F(2, 233) = 0.881$. As the data in Table 4 indicate, no differences were found among the three types in husbands' reported closeness. For wives, an overall difference was found among types, $F(2, 233) = 4.65$, $p < .05$, with wives in secure and insecure–mixed couples reporting higher levels of closeness than did those in fearful avoidant couples. However, no differences among groups were found in a post hoc test at a $p < .01$ significance level.

Dyadic types of neuroticism. The multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures showed no significant gender effect, $F(1, 244) = 0.202$, with a significant effect of couple type, $F(3, 244) = 3.599$, $p < .05$, and an interaction effect of gender and type, $F(3, 244) = 5.929$, $p < .01$. As Table 5 shows, significant differences were found among types in both husbands' and wives' perceived marital quality. Among couples in the low-neuroticism type (i.e.,

Table 4

Husbands' and Wives' Self-Perceived Marital Relationships by Dyadic Attachment Style

Variable	Both secure (<i>n</i> = 97)		Both insecure (<i>n</i> = 72)		Mixed (<i>n</i> = 79)		<i>F</i> (2, 233)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Husband marital quality	5.78 _a	0.68	5.23 _b	1.03	5.79 _a	0.87	10.48**
Wife marital quality	5.90 _a	0.77	5.29 _b	1.13	5.52 _{ab}	0.87	9.70**
Husband closeness	3.11	0.67	2.86	0.69	3.09	0.76	2.39
Wife closeness	3.02	0.67	2.73	0.72	3.06	0.72	4.65*

Note. Means within each row whose subscripts differ are different at $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Husbands' and Wives' Self-Perceived Marital Relationships by Dyadic Neuroticism

Variable	Both low (<i>n</i> = 73)		Wife high– husband low (<i>n</i> = 77)		Husband high–wife low (<i>n</i> = 62)		Both high (<i>n</i> = 36)		<i>F</i> (3, 232)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Husband marital quality	5.88 _a	0.70	5.70 _{ab}	0.84	5.38 _b	0.96	5.37 _{ab}	1.03	5.06**
Wife marital quality	5.92 _a	0.85	5.48 _{ab}	0.90	5.64 _{ab}	0.89	5.19 _b	1.15	6.04**
Husband closeness	3.21	0.75	3.00	0.70	2.88	0.67	3.00	0.66	2.92*
Wife closeness	3.12	0.71	2.93	0.66	2.84	0.73	2.81	0.76	2.25

Note Means within each row whose subscripts differ are different at $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

both spouses scored low on neuroticism), both spouses reported high levels of marital quality. Significantly lower levels of marital quality were reported by husbands in the male-neuroticism type and by wives in the high-neuroticism type (i.e., couples in which both spouses scored high on neuroticism).

With respect to felt closeness, the analysis of variance indicated no significant effect of couple type, $F(3, 232) = 0.647$, with a significant gender effect, $F(1, 232) = 7.774$, $p < .01$, and a significant interaction effect of gender and type, $F(3, 232) = 2.879$, $p < .05$. As the data in Table 5 show, no differences were found among the four types in wives' reported closeness. For husbands, an overall difference was found among types, $F(3, 232) = 2.92$, $p < .05$, with husbands in the low-neuroticism couples reporting higher levels of closeness than those in the male-neuroticism type. However, no differences among groups were found in a post hoc test at a $p < .01$ significance level.

Discussion

Although the effect of spouses' personality traits on their own and their partner's marital adjustment has received considerable attention, relatively little research has been conducted on the joint effect of both spouses' personality traits. In recent years, a few scholars have argued that, given the impact of each partner on the other's thoughts, feelings, and actions, there is a need to move beyond the individual as the unit of analysis (Feeney, 2003).

The present article focuses on couple types based on two personality traits—attachment security and neuroticism—as they relate to two facets of the marital relationship: a global evaluation of the relationship quality and variations in the couple's closeness—distance during daily experiences. Both these personality traits, attachment and neuroticism, have been

most frequently studied in relation to marital quality and have been shown to predict marital quality, satisfaction, and adjustment (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Mikulincer et al., 2002). A few studies have examined couple types based on attachment security, but we are not aware of research involving couple types based on neuroticism.

In this section, we first discuss some methodological issues concerning the classification of couples on the basis of both partners' personality traits. We then discuss the findings in an attempt to answer the question of how and why dyadic configurations of personality traits shape marital relationships. Before we discuss the findings, a few notes are in order regarding the methodological approach taken in this study for classifying couples. As noted earlier, a few researchers have classified couples on the basis of both partners' attachment security. Typically, each partner has been classified into an attachment type (secure, anxious/ambivalent, or avoidant), and the two partners' types have then been combined into three types: a secure couple type, in which both spouses have been described as secure; an insecure couple type, in which both spouses have been described as anxious/ambivalent or avoidant; and a mixed couple type, in which one spouse has been described as securely attached and the other as insecurely attached. In the present study, the analysis is based on the dimensional approach recommended by attachment researchers (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998) as a basis for couple typology. Cluster analyzing the data of both spouses' attachment dimensions—anxiety and avoidance—as well as both spouses' level of neuroticism yielded typologies of couples based on both partners' personality traits. We believe that this approach better suits a systemic view of couples because it identifies couples on the basis of the natural configuration of the

partners' attachment security rather than treating each spouse's attachment style or level of neuroticism individually.

On the basis of both husbands' and wives' anxiety and avoidance dimensions of attachment security, the analysis yielded three dyadic attachment configurations: a *secure* type and two types of insecure attachment configurations: *fearful avoidant* and *insecure-mixed* (preoccupied and dismissing avoidant). These configurations were further validated by correspondence analysis (see Figure 1). Evidently, this typology differs from the one used by previous researchers (secure, insecure, and mixed secure-insecure; see, e.g., Senchak & Leonard, 1992), which is based on individual husband and wife typologies. The generalizability of our typology should be validated in future research with other samples.

Considering attachment security and neuroticism at a dyadic level, the findings imply an important difference: Whereas mixed couples are differentiated by gender (i.e., which spouse presents a high or low level of the trait) in neuroticism, gender does not play a role in couple types of attachment security. In other words, dyadic-level attachment types are not dependent on which spouse presents a specific attachment security type. Thus, it appears that attachment security may yield itself to dyadic conceptualization better than neuroticism.

Global Evaluation of the Relationship and Perceived Closeness as Applied to Couple Attachment Security and Neuroticism

Overall, gender differences were found in perceived daily closeness but not in global perceptions of marital quality. Evidently, husbands reported more closeness than wives regardless of specific dyadic configurations of attachment and neuroticism. Because perceived closeness refers to daily experiences, we speculate that it may be shaped by daily occurrences, such as hassles, strains, and interrole conflicts (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2003). It may well be that women perceive lower levels of closeness because they are more affected by negative daily experiences than men are. This may be because women scored higher than men on neuroticism; that is, they tended to attribute greater significance to negative occurrences than to positive ones. However, future research will have to validate this explanation by examining the associations between daily life events and daily fluctuations in felt closeness.

An important finding of this study concerns the variations of marital quality and daily closeness

across dyadic-level types of attachment security and neuroticism. More specifically, for both attachment and neuroticism couple types, greater and more consistent differences among types were found in global perceptions of the marriage quality than in daily closeness. This observation may imply that, as a global perception of the relationship, marital quality appears to be more sensitive than daily closeness to the dyadic-level attachment security and neuroticism.

Why is it that marital quality is more strongly related than closeness to dyadic configuration of personality traits? Compared with closeness, which refers to daily and short-lived occurrences, a global perception of relationship quality is based on long-term, accumulated experiences. Relationship quality is evaluated in light of one's perception of the degree to which the marriage is a "safe haven" and the partner is accessible and trustworthy. Daily closeness, conversely, although partly shaped by the attachment security of both partners (Pistole, 1994), is also influenced by other daily occurrences that are not as closely shaped by the spouses' personality. Further research should explore the effects of partners' other long-term characteristics, such as trust, support, and caring, on the marital relationships.

We were surprised to find that high levels of marital quality were reported not only by secure spouses but also by insecure-mixed couples. This finding may suggest that preoccupied and dismissing avoidant spouses compatibly accommodate each other and that this combination creates a functional and satisfying marital relationship. It is important to note that this finding stands in contrast with findings of previous research (Mikulincer et al., 2002; Senchak & Leonard, 1992), which found that secure couples reported higher marital satisfaction than mixed and insecure couples. However, these researchers have compared secure, insecure, and mixed (secure-insecure) couples but have not considered a potential configuration of insecure-mixed couples.

With regard to variations in marital quality among different dyadic types of neuroticism, the findings indicate some gender differences. For both husbands and wives, high levels of marital quality were reported by couples in which both spouses were low on neuroticism; however, wives reported lower marital quality when both spouses were high on neuroticism, whereas husbands reported lower marital quality when they themselves were high on neuroticism. These findings may be explained by women's greater sensitivity than men's to their partner's feelings and behaviors. Because neuroticism implies greater sensitivity to negative experiences, including thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors (Bouchard et al., 1999), the combination of both spouses' neuroticism affects wives' evaluation of the relationship more than the husbands'.

In conclusion, this study shows that some individual personality traits (attachment security) yield themselves more than others (neuroticism) to the construction of dyadic-level attributes in explaining variations in marital relationships. These dyadic attributes explain some aspects of the relationship (global perception of marital quality) more than others (felt closeness). Furthermore, we find that gender makes a difference in how various aspects of the relationship are perceived by couples of different dyadic types of attachment and neuroticism.

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