Couple Similarity and Marital Satisfaction: Are Similar Spouses Happier?

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ABSTRACT This study examined the role of couple similarity in spouses' marital satisfaction and affect. The associations between spousal similarity and relationship measures were examined in a sample of 248 married couples. As hypothesized, greater similarity between partners was associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of negative affect. In particular, similarity on the gendered personality and values domains was more strongly associated with relationship measures, whereas similarity on the attitudes and religiosity domains showed weaker and inconsistent patterns of associations. Finally, profile-based similarity tended to be a stronger and more consistent correlate of relationship measures than difference score-based similarity. The implications of these findings for processes underlying intimate relationships are discussed.

Relationship researchers have long been interested in whether greater similarity is associated with better relationship quality (e.g., Heaton, 1984; Meyer & Pepper, 1977; see for review Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Recent advances in measurement and analysis techniques have prompted new attempts to answer this question using more elaborated procedures (e.g., Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Luo & Klohnen, 2005; Watson et al., 2004).

Despite a growing body of literature on the link between couple similarity and satisfaction, the evidence is equivocal. Whereas some studies have found that spousal similarity is associated with greater marital satisfaction (e.g., Blum & Mehrabian, 1999; Caspi & Herbener,

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1990; Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000; Russell & Wells, 1991), other studies have failed to find such an association (e.g., Gattis et al., 2004; Glicksohn & Golan, 2001; Watson et al., 2004). These conflicting results have recently led researchers to conclude that "the available evidence is inconsistent and difficult to interpret" (Watson et al., 2004, p. 1035) and that "the association of similarity and dissimilarity with marital satisfaction is largely unknown" (Gattis et al., 2004, p. 567).

Several flaws have plagued much of the research on the link between couple similarity and satisfaction. First, most studies on this issue have focused exclusively on similarity in personality traits (e.g., Gattis et al., 2004; Nemechek & Olson, 1999; Robins et al., 2000). Although personality traits seem particularly important to overall similarity between partners, other dimensions (e.g. value priorities, attitudes, religious beliefs) may play an important role as well. Moreover, it is plausible that some dimensions of similarity contribute more than others to explaining marital satisfaction. Second, many studies examining the link between similarity and satisfaction have been based on relatively small sample sizes (e.g., Glicksohn & Golan, 2001). This fact adds to the interpretative difficulties of the findings. Finally, almost all of the studies on this link have implemented the difference scores operationalization of couple similarity. Although intuitive and easy to grasp, this operationalization has several major drawbacks, as explained below.

The present study attempts to address these issues and extend previous research in several important ways. Using a large sample of married couples, this study examines similarity over a broad range of domains, including value priorities, gendered personality traits, family role attitudes, and religiosity. This broad examination makes it possible to assess the effects of similarity across different domains by direct comparison. Moreover, this study further explores the effect of couple similarity on the spouses' positive and negative affect. Finally, this study implements a profile-based operationalization of similarity, which has several advantages over the widely used difference scores operationalization. The two approaches are then compared to assess the relative strength of their associations with marital satisfaction.

Dimensions of Similarity Between Partners

As mentioned above, almost all previous studies have focused on the role of personality traits and have yielded inconsistent results

regarding the link between similarity and satisfaction (e.g., Gattis et al., 2004; Robins et al., 2000). One exception is the recent study by Lou and Klohnen (2005), in which similarity measures were obtained on values, political attitudes, and religiosity, as well as on personality domains. On the basis of their findings, these researchers concluded that whereas similarity on personality domains is associated with marital satisfaction, similarity on values, attitudes, and religiosity is not.

There are several reasons, however, to reexamine this conclusion empirically. First, the measure of value priorities that served in Lou and Klohnen's study (2005) was a short inventory developed specifically for that study, with no available reliability and validity indicators. The present study adopts the measure developed by Schwartz (1992) on the basis of his *theory of human values* (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). This theory suggests that the primary content aspect that differentiates values is the type of motivational goal they express. As a person attributes greater importance to a value, the attainment of goals to which that value is directed will become more important. In a series of cross-cultural studies, Schwartz (1992) showed that people's basic values are usually organized into 10 distinct motivational types: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. Schwartz (1992) also identified two orthogonal conflicts between categories of values: values reflecting openness to change (e.g., stimulation, self-direction) oppose values reflecting conservatism (e.g., tradition, conformity), and values reflecting self-enhancement (power, achievement) oppose values reflecting self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence).

Schwartz's values inventory served to test this theory in more than 200 samples from over 60 countries (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). This set of 10 value types has also been used to explain a wide variety of attitudes and behaviors across many countries (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). It is therefore possible that couples' similarity in values, as measured by this well-established measure, would show positive associations with marital satisfaction.

Second, with regard to the attitudes domain, Lou and Klohnen's study (2005) focused on political attitudes. Spouses' political attitudes are relatively general views that do not relate directly to their everyday family activities. Similarity on these attitudes may therefore not be particularly relevant to marital satisfaction. Ajzen

and Fishbein (1977) proposed that whereas general attitudes can serve as predictors of a set of related behaviors, in order for an attitude to predict a certain behavior it must be specific to that behavior. Similarity on attitudes regarding the husband's and wife's family roles may thus be more suitable for testing the effect of similarity on marital satisfaction. Similarity on these specific attitudes seems important for agreement or conflict concerning parenting activities and the allocation of responsibilities. The present study focuses on attitudes toward family roles in general and toward parental roles in particular, assuming that spousal similarity on this dimension may have important implications for relationship outcomes.

With regard to the personality domain, this study focuses on three categories of personality traits (Bem, 1974): traits that are perceived by laypeople as typical of women (feminine traits); traits that are perceived as typical of men (masculine traits); and neutral personality traits. The use of this classification makes the notion of complementarity ("opposites attracts") seem relatively plausible in that it portrays the feminine wife married to the masculine husband, both satisfied with their well-defined roles in the relationship. Therefore, this gendered traits domain seems particularly relevant for testing the question of whether marital satisfaction is linked to couple similarity or complementarity.

Difference-Score-Based Versus Profile-Based Similarity

Most previous research has implemented difference scores operationalization of couple similarity. Absolute value difference scores are typically computed by subtracting one spouse's score on a particular dimension from the other spouse's score and then computing the absolute value of this difference. Difference scores are computed on the overarching index level rather than on the individual-item level, therefore discarding a substantial amount of information (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). In addition, absolute value difference scores can only range from zero, indicating that spouses have equal levels of an attribute, to some positive number, indicating that spouses have different levels on that attribute (Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

Profile scores operationalization of couple similarity, on the other hand, captures each couple's similarity in terms of organization of responses. A profile similarity index is computed for every couple by

correlating each husband's and wife's responses across all items on a given domain. Thus, this type of similarity index takes into account a considerable amount of information, compared to difference score-based similarity. In addition, profile similarity indices are sensitive to the varying degrees of agreement and disagreement that may exist between husbands and wives in terms of any given set of attributes (Luo & Klohnen, 2005). Similarity scores can range from negative correlations, suggesting that spouses are opposite in terms of the profile of their ratings on a given domain, to positive correlations, suggesting that spouses are similar to each other.

To date, only three studies on the link between similarity and satisfaction have operationalized similarity through profile correlations. Two of these studies focused solely on couple similarity in personality characteristics, with inconsistent results: One of them found a positive association with marital satisfaction (Caspi & Herbener, 1990), and the other did not (Glicksohn & Golan, 2001). The third is Luo and Klohnen's study (2005) described above, in which similarity in values and attitudes was not related to relationship quality. However, as the above discussion suggests, extending the measurement of values and shifting the focus of attitudes may broaden our understanding of the pattern of associations between similarity and satisfaction.

The Present Study

In light of the above reasoning, the present study examines the role of couple similarity in spouses' marital satisfaction and affect. This study examines similarity in value priorities, gendered personality traits, role attitudes, and religiosity. In general, it is hypothesized that the more similar spouses are to each other, the higher their levels of marital satisfaction and positive affect, and the lower their level of negative affect. The study further attempts to explore whether similarity on certain dimensions is more predictive of relationship outcomes than similarity on other dimensions. Moreover, because marital satisfaction was found to be related to psychological well-being (e.g., Gable et al., 2004; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004), this study explores whether couple similarity is also linked to spouses' positive and negative affect. Finally, this study implements both the widely used difference score-based similarity as well as the profile-based operationalization of

similarity. The contribution of the two similarity indices is compared to assess the relative strength of their associations with relationship satisfaction.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

The sample for the current study is part of a larger research project on work and family. Participants were 248 Jewish Israeli heterosexual couples recruited by research assistants through day care centers and community child-health facilities.

The age of women in this sample ranged from 20 to 45 years ($M = 30$, $SD = 4.5$). The age of men ranged from 22 to 59 years ($M = 32$, $SD = 5.7$). The number of children per couple ranged from 1 to 5 ($M = 1.78$, $SD = .96$). Approximately 71% of the husbands and 78% of the wives had some college-level education, and 5% of the participants had not finished high school.

Trained interviewers visited the couples in their homes. During the visit, participants completed comprehensive self-report questionnaires, which took approximately 1 hour to complete. In two families, only one spouse filled out the questionnaire, and that family's data were eliminated from further use. Other missing data were subjected to listwise deletion.

Measures

Values. The importance that the participants attribute to each of 44 single values as guiding principles in their life was measured with the Schwartz (1992) value inventory. Each value is accompanied by a short descriptive phrase, and the participants used a 9-point rating scale ranging from -1 to 7 to rate the importance of each value as a guiding principle in their life. The rating scale was labeled as follows: -1 (*opposed to my values*), 0 (*not important*), 3 (*important*), 6 (*very important*), and 7 (*of supreme importance*). The average score for the items in the standard indexes was computed to measure the priority given to each of the 10 value types (Schwartz, 1992). Cronbach's alphas for the value indexes were as follows: power .68, achievement .76, hedonism .65, stimulation .70, self-direction .65, universalism .74, benevolence .66, tradition .61, conformity .66, and security .60. These reliabilities were within the range of variation commonly observed for these value types (e.g., Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002).

Gendered personality traits. Participants' gendered personality was measured via the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974). This instrument consists of 60 personality items that were selected to represent 20 masculine characteristics (e.g., self-reliant, analytical), 20 feminine characteristics (e.g., compassionate, tender), and 20 neutral characteristics (e.g., friendly, sincere). The respondent is asked to indicate on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *never true* to 7 = *always true*, the extent to which the characteristic is self-descriptive. The average score for the items in each index was computed, and Cronbach's alphas for the indexes were .87 for masculine traits, .77 for feminine traits, and .64 for neutral traits.

Family role attitudes. A 10-item scale was designed to measure participants' attitudes toward the roles of men and women in the family. Sample items include "Fathers should be as intensively involved in childcare as mothers" and "Mothers are inherently better caregivers than fathers." The five response categories extended on a continuum from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and were recoded so that a high score reflected more egalitarian attitudes toward family roles. The average score for the 10 items was computed in order to obtain the respondent's score on family role attitudes. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .83.

Sociodemographic characteristics. Participants completed extensive demographic questionnaires. Demographic variables used in the current analyses include age, education level, number of children in the family, and level of religiosity. Religiosity was indicated on a 4-point scale, labeled as follows: 1 (*secular*), 2 (*traditional*), 3 (*orthodox*), 4 (*ultra-orthodox*).

Marital satisfaction. Participants' marital satisfaction was measured via the short version of Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication, and Happiness (ENRICH; Fowers & Olson, 1993). This is a 10-item Likert-type scale that assesses the respondent's perceived quality of marriage across 10 dimensions of the relationship (spouse's personal traits, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexuality, child rearing, relationship with the extended family, division of labor, and trust). Responses are indicated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *fully disagree* to 7 = *fully agree*. An additional item asked participants to indicate their overall satisfaction with their marital relationship, on a 7-point scale that range from 1 = *dissatisfied* to 7 = *extremely satisfied*. An average of the 11 items was calculated to create a measure of overall marital satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .78.

Positive and negative affect. Participants' affect was measured using the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969). Participants indicated whether they had experienced any of five positive feelings (e.g., excited, proud) and five negative feelings (e.g., depressed, bored) during the past 2 weeks. Responses were indicated on a 4-point scale labeled as follows: 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, and 4 = *frequently*. The average scores for the 5 positive items and the 5 negative items were computed in order to obtain the respondent's positive and negative affect scores. Cronbach's alphas for these measures were .66 and .60 respectively.

Computing Couple Similarity

Spouses' similarity was operationalized both in terms of the profile of the partners' ratings and of the difference between their scores. To obtain profile-based similarity, I computed the correlations between each husband's and wife's self-ratings on all items for each of the three domains (values, traits, and attitudes). Specifically, each spouse was treated as if he or she were a separate variable, and each item was treated as an individual who provided answers on both variables. A correlation was then calculated between those two spouses (variables), and the number of items comprising that correlation represented the number of observations or the sample size. The correlations are descriptive indices of similarity between two persons, with possible values ranging from −1.00 (complete opposites) to 1.00 (complete similarity).

To obtain difference score-based similarity, I computed the absolute value of the difference between each husband's and wive's ratings on a certain index (e.g., each of the 10 value type indexes). I then averaged the difference scores on the indexes included in each of the three domains.

RESULTS

The hypotheses were evaluated in three steps. First, I examined the correlations between wives' and husbands' original measures of value priorities, gendered traits, family role attitudes, marital satisfaction, and affect. Second, I examined the correlations between profile-based and difference score–based similarity and satisfaction measures separately for husbands and wives. Third, to determine which domains of spouse similarity contribute more to explaining each of the satisfaction and affect measures, a series of multiple regression analyses was conducted for husbands and wives separately. In each of these analyses, a variable pertaining to one dependent measure was regressed on the set of similarity domains.

Preliminary Analyses

Intercorrelations between individual measures. Table 1 presents Pearson correlations between wives' and husbands' original measures of value priorities, gendered traits, family role attitudes, marital satisfaction, and affect. The intercorrelations among individual measures followed the previously documented patterns (e.g., Gaunt, 2006; Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005): More religious individuals tend to hold more traditional family role attitudes and attribute greater importance to conservation values. The correlation between religiosity and the importance attributed to tradition values was particularly high among both husbands and wives. Similarly, attributing importance to self-enhancement values correlated with personality traits that are perceived as masculine, whereas attributing importance to self-transcendent values correlated with personality traits that are perceived as feminine.

Correlations between spouses' measures. The correlations between wives' measures and those of their husbands are presented in Table 1. The correlations between husbands' and wives' values were generally low, except for the relatively high correlation between the importance attributed to tradition values by the spouses. There were weak-to-moderate correlations between husbands' and wives' traits and between their attitudes. Exceptionally strong was the association between the levels of husbands' and wives' religiosity.

Correlations with marital satisfaction and affect. Finally, Table 1 also shows the correlations between the original measures and husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction and affect. In general, marital satisfaction and negative affect showed weak or no correlations with the individual measures. Positive affect was moderately linked to some values and traits. Finally, husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction strongly correlated, whereas their positive and negative affect measures showed weak correlations with each other.

Intercorrelations among similarity measures. The intercorrelations among the measures of spousal similarity on the four domains were generally low, suggesting that they reflect relatively independent aspects of similarity (Table 2). Similarity on the traits and the religiosity domains was related to similarity on the values domain.

Table 1

Pearson Correlations Between Value Priorities, Gendered Traits, Family Role Attitudes, Religiosity, Marital Satisfaction and Affect

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Hedonism values	.35***	.48***	.35***	.27***	.11	−.11	.12*	.32***	.32***	.33***	.20**	.17**	.21***	.11	−.36***	.01	.25***	.06
2. Stimulation values	.52***	.11	.43***	.39***	.08	−.09	.05	.18**	.24***	.33***	.33***	.06	.10	.16*	−.33***	.02	.18**	.14*
3. Self-direction values	.40***	.55***	.17**	.46***	.28***	−.03	.15*	.32***	.32***	.51***	.34***	.12	.14*	.20**	−.20**	.14*	.27***	−.03
4. Universalism values	.41***	.51***	.58***	.20**	.39***	.20**	.42***	.42***	.15*	.24***	.11	.32***	.20**	.23***	−.15*	.17**	.16**	.07
5. Benevolence values	.20***	.17**	.26***	.37***	.10	.39***	.51***	.46***	.20**	.36***	.23***	.41***	.33***	−.01	.17**	.20**	.22***	−.03
6. Tradition values	−.01	.10	.05	.21***	.50***	.47***	.53***	.36***	.12*	.11	.06	.24***	.22***	−.25***	.62***	.12	.12*	.04
7. Conformity values	.21***	.23***	.18**	.33***	.60***	.62***	.32***	.59***	.30***	.33***	.21**	.28***	.39***	−.11	.16**	.12*	.22***	.12
8. Security values	.26***	.24***	.22***	.39***	.50***	.55***	.69***	.23***	.39***	.45***	.22***	.25***	.33***	−.03	.11	.18**	.25***	.01
9. Power values	.30***	.29***	.29***	.28***	.09	.17**	.32***	.39***	.17**	.65***	.42***	.03	.25***	−.03	−.07	−.11	.20**	.22***
10. Achievement values	.33***	.46***	.59***	.38***	.30***	.17**	.32***	.27***	.40***	.13*	.53***	.09	.27***	−.07	−.07	.06	.28***	.07
11. Masculine traits	.33***	.42***	.50***	.20***	.12	−.02	.12	.05	.34***	.59***	.12	.11	.39***	−.02	−.07	.04	.36***	.02
12. Feminine traits	.24***	.13*	.12	.24***	.46***	.40***	.49***	.42***	.10	.22***	−.02	.03	.60***	.13*	.04	.16*	.29***	.01
13. Neutral traits	.26***	.22***	.22***	.20***	.34***	.32***	.46***	.38***	.28***	.36***	.37***	.59***	.27***	−.01	−.02	.03	.21**	.18**
14. Family role attitudes	.18**	.21***	.19**	.18**	−.06	−.22***	−.19**	−.12	−.01	.18**	.14*	−.06	.01	.36***	−.27***	.01	.06	−.03
15. Religiosity	−.36***	−.20***	−.26***	−.19**	.18**	.56***	.15*	.12	−.12	−.11	−.18**	.08	−.02	−.21***	.90***	.16*	−.01	−.03
16. Marital satisfaction	.11	.06	.06	.05	.18**	−.01	.01	−.01	−.13*	.09	.06	.09	−.01	.12*	.01	.49***	.27***	−.24***
17. Positive affect	.25***	.19**	.30***	.18**	.19**	.04	.11	.08	.01	.30***	.31***	.25***	.20***	.07	−.09	.33***	.20**	−.03
18. Negative affect	−.10	.01	−.03	.01	−.07	.12	.06	−.01	.12*	.01	.01	.10	.23***	.01	.08	−.26***	−.13*	−.13*

Note: Tests of significance were two-tailed. Correlations above the diagonal are for wives and those below the diagonal are for husbands. The values on the diagonal are correlations between spouses' scores.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 2

Intercorrelations Among Similarity Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Values similarity—diff	–						
2. Values similarity—prof	−.40***	–					
3. Gendered traits similarity—diff	.08	−.18**	–				
4. Gendered traits similarity—prof	−.20**	.28***	−.43***	–			
5. Family role attitudes similarity—diff	.04	−.07	.01	.01	–		
6. Family role attitudes similarity—prof	−.02	.08	.01	.10	−.04	–	
7. Religiosity—diff	.16*	−.21**	.05	−.09	.01	.08	–
M	1.03	.43	.63	.35	.57	.51	.14
SD	.35	.15	.33	.18	.48	.30	.37

Note: Tests of significance were two-tailed.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

The two indices of values similarity were moderately correlated, as well as the two indices of gendered traits similarity. However, the two indices of couple similarity on the attitudes domain were unrelated to each other or to the other similarity measures.

Correlation Analyses

Table 3 presents Pearson correlations between profile-based and difference score–based similarity and husbands' and wives' satisfaction and affect. Overall and consistent with the hypotheses, greater similarity between partners was associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and with lower levels of negative affect. The evidence regarding levels of positive affect is weaker.

For both husbands and wives, similarity on the gendered personality traits and values domains was more strongly and more consistently associated with satisfaction and affect. Similarity on the attitudes and religiosity domains showed weaker and inconsistent patterns of associations. Among the subindexes of the difference score–based similarity in values, similarity on self-direction, conformity, and achievement values was the most important for wives' satisfaction

and affect, whereas similarity on benevolence values was particularly important for husbands' satisfaction and negative affect.

In general, marital satisfaction showed the strongest and most consistent associations with couple similarity on almost all domains. Negative affect showed somewhat weaker associations with similarity in values and traits (although there were no significant differences between the correlations) and no associations with similarity in attitudes and religiosity. Positive affect was not related to almost any of the couple similarity domains.

Regression Analyses

To test more specifically which similarity domains were most important in explaining relationship measures, I ran a set of multiple regression analyses for husbands and wives separately. In each analysis, a variable pertaining to one dependent measure was regressed on the set of similarity domains.

Husbands' measures. Table 4 indicates that the regression equation of marital satisfaction on the set of spousal similarity domains was significant overall and accounted for 18% of the variance in the husband's satisfaction with marriage. Three of the similarity domains were significant predictors in the analysis: partners' profile-based similarity on the gendered personality domain, their profiled-based similarity on the values domain, and their difference score–based similarity on the attitudes domain. The greater the spousal similarity on traits, values, and attitudes, the more satisfied the husband was with his marital relationship.

The regression of a husband's positive affect on the set of spousal similarity domains was not significant. The only significant predictor of the husband's positive affect was couple similarity in religiosity: The greater the spousal similarity on religious beliefs, the more the husband experienced positive emotions.

The regression of the husband's negative affect on the set of spousal similarity domains was significant overall and accounted for 7% of the variance in negative affect. Two of the similarity domains were significant predictors in the analysis: partners' profile-based similarity on the values domain, and their profile-based similarity on the gendered personality domain. The greater the spousal similarity on values and traits, the less the husband experienced negative emotions.

Table 3

Correlations Between Profile-Based (Prof) and Difference Score–Based (Diff) Similarity, Marital Satisfaction, and Affect

	Wives' measures			Husbands' measures		
	Marital satisfaction	Positive affect	Negative affect	Marital satisfaction	Positive affect	Negative affect
Values similarity						
Hedonism values—diff	−.03	−.14*	.12	−.01	−.06	−.08
Stimulation values—diff	−.04	−.11	.03	−.06	.01	−.01
Self-direction values—diff	−.19**	−.15*	.19**	−.12	−.04	−.01
Universalism values—diff	.01	.01	−.06	−.02	−.04	−.06
Benevolence values—diff	−.15*	−.04	.04	−.16*	−.06	.15*
Tradition values—diff	−.09	.04	.03	−.06	.01	.12
Conformity values—diff	−.13*	−.09	.15*	−.08	.01	.11
Security values—diff	−.10	−.01	.10	−.09	−.04	.06
Power values—diff	−.01	.05	.07	.01	−.02	.11
Achievement values—diff	−.12*	−.10	.21**	−.02	.05	−.01
Overall values similarity—diff	−.19**	−.12*	.19**	−.13*	−.04	.08
Values similarity—prof	.19**	.01	−.11	.27***	.01	−.21***
Gendered traits similarity						
Masculine traits—diff	−.13*	−.12*	.05	−.03	.16**	.07
Feminine traits—diff	−.12*	−.07	.13*	−.11	−.13*	−.01
Neutral traits—diff	−.10	−.02	.09	−.19**	−.13*	.06

(Continued)

Table 3 (Contd.)

	Wives' measures			Husbands' measures		
	Marital satisfaction	Positive affect	Negative affect	Marital satisfaction	Positive affect	Negative affect
Overall gendered traits similarity—diff	−.18**	−.12*	.13*	−.15*	−.01	.07
Gendered traits similarity—prof	.30***	.10	−.25***	.33***	.09	−.17**
Family role attitudes similarity − diff	−.05	.09	−.05	−.16*	.09	.09
Family role attitudes similarity—prof	−.01	.02	.08	.09	.04	−.01
Religiosity[a]—diff	−.16*	−.06	−.10	−.14*	.13*	−.03

Note: Tests of significance were two-tailed.
[a]Religiosity was measured by only one question, and therefore a profile-based similarity score could not be computed.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Wives' measures. The regression equation of a wife's marital satisfaction on the set of spousal similarity domains was significant overall and accounted for 13% of the variance in the wife's satisfaction with marriage (Table 4). Two of the similarity domains were significant predictors in the analysis: partners' profile-based similarity on the gendered personality domain, and their similarity on the religiosity domain. The greater the spousal similarity in traits and religious beliefs, the more satisfied the wife was with her marriage.

The regression of a wife's positive affect on the set of spousal similarity domains was not significant. The only significant predictor of the wife's positive affect was partners' difference-based similarity on the values domain: the greater the spousal similarity in values, the more the wife experienced positive emotions.

The regression of a wife's negative affect on the set of spousal similarity domains was significant overall and accounted for 11% of

Table 4

Regression Analyses Predicting Marital Satisfaction and Affect From Profile-Based (Prof) and Difference Score–Based (Diff) Similarity

	Values similarity		Gendered traits Similarity		Family role attitudes similarity		Religiosity similarity[a]			
	Diff	Prof	Diff	Prof	Diff	Prof	Diff	Prof	R^2	$F(7, 216)$
Husbands										
Marital satisfaction	.02	.17*	−.01	.26***	−.17*	.04	−.10	–	.18	6.96***
Positive affect	−.05	−.01	.02	.10	.05	.02	.14*	–	.03	1.11
Negative affect	−.01	.19**	.03	.13*	−.11	−.03	.04	–	.07	2.66**
Wives										
Marital satisfaction	−.10	.02	−.05	.24***	−.05	−.02	−.13*	–	.13	4.76***
Positive affect	−.14*	−.07	−.11	.03	.07	.03	−.03	–	.04	1.52
Negative affect	−.17*	−.01	−.02	.21**	.05	−.10	−.03	–	.11	3.94***

Note: Standardized beta coefficients are reported.

[a]Religiosity was measured by only one question, and therefore a profile-based similarity score could not be computed.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

the variance in negative affect. Two of the similarity domains were significant predictors in the analysis: partners' difference-based similarity on the values domain and their profiled-based similarity on the gendered personality domain. The greater the spousal similarity in values and traits, the less the wife experienced negative emotions.

Tests of significant differences in coefficients between difference score–based and profile-based similarity indices were conducted applying the Fisher z transformation (Cohen & Cohen, 1984). Results indicated that the effects of profile-based similarity in values on the husband's marital satisfaction and negative affect were significantly larger than those of the difference score–based similarity in values. In addition, the effects of profile-based similarity in gendered traits on the husband's and wife's marital satisfaction and on the wife's negative affect were significantly larger than those of the difference score–based similarity in gendered traits. However, the effect of difference score–based similarity in role attitudes on the husband's marital satisfaction was significantly larger than that of the profile-based similarity in attitudes, and the effect of difference score–based similarity in values on the wife's negative affect was significantly larger than that of the profile-based similarity in values.

All in all, profile-based similarity seemed a somewhat stronger and more consistent correlate of relationship measures than difference score–based similarity, although the pattern of differences between coefficients was not overwhelming.

DISCUSSION

Results from the current study indicate important relationships between spousal similarity and marital satisfaction. Consistent with the hypotheses, greater similarity between partners was associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of negative affect. In particular, similarity on the gendered personality and values domains was strongly associated with relationship measures, whereas similarity on the role attitudes and religiosity domains showed weaker and inconsistent patterns of associations. Finally, the results indicated that profile-based similarity tends to be a stronger and more consistent correlate of relationship measures than difference score-based similarity.

The findings regarding the strong associations between similarity in gendered personality traits and marital measures are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Gattis et al., 2004; Robins et al., 2000; Watson et al., 2004). However, the findings relating similarity on the values domain to marital measures are at odds with previous findings (Lou & Klohnen, 2005). This inconsistency may stem from the use of different measurement methods. The current study adopted a well-validated measure of value priorities, which was developed on the basis of the theory of human values (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). It is plausible that this highly valid and sensitive measure revealed a pattern of associations that previously was hidden due to insufficient measurement.

The focus on attitudes toward family roles was less fruitful. In comparison to political views, attitudes toward parenting and family roles seem more relevant to everyday functioning as a family. Indeed, for the husbands in this study, similarity on the attitudes domain was related to marital satisfaction but not to positive and negative affect. For the wives in the study, similarity on the attitudes domain was unrelated to marital satisfaction and affect. Therefore, the hypothesis regarding the role of specific attitudes has gained little support. Future research could benefit from considering similarity on a wider range of specific attitudes, including attitudes regarding family roles, childrearing, financial management, etc.

This study also highlights the implications of couple similarity for partners' negative affect. The association between marital satisfaction and spouses' affect is not new to researchers (e.g., Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004). The findings from the current study indicate that couple similarity is linked to negative affect but not so much to positive affect. Presumably, discrepancies in values and traits between spouses may stimulate marital conflicts and negative emotions of anger and resentment. Future studies should further explore the contribution of couple's similarity to spouses' affect and well-being, examining the possible mediating role of marital conflict.

Finally, this study compared two operationalizations of couple similarity: the widely used difference-scores operationalization and the rarely used profile-based operationalization. Consistent with the rationale regarding the greater amount of information taken into account in the latter (cf. Luo & Klohnen, 2005), the profile-based similarity appears to be a stronger and more consistent correlate of

relationship measures. Despite its obvious advantages, only three studies to date have implemented profile-based operationalization to study the link between similarity and marital satisfaction (Caspi & Herbener, 1990; Glicksohn & Golan, 2001; Luo & Klohnen, 2005). The comparison between the results of these two similarity indices, therefore, suggests that the associations of similarity with relationship measures may be stronger than implied by the findings from previous studies.

The limitations of this study should be noted. The sample was restricted to married couples with young children. This restriction may limit the implications that can be derived from the findings. Couple similarity may have different implications for relationships in other stages of life, as it may for couples without children or for parents of older children. In addition, the majority of the participants were fairly well-educated, a fact that further restricts the generalizability of the findings to other populations.

Another limitation was the cross-sectional design of this study, which implied the simultaneous measurement of couple similarity and relationship measures. Like previous research in this area (e.g. Glicksohn & Golan, 2001; Robins et al., 2000; Russell & Wells, 1991), this design cannot be used to address issues regarding the direction of causal relations. It is possible that satisfied couples become increasingly similar with time, so that couple similarity is the result, and not the cause, of marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, support for the current rationale regarding the causal direction comes from studies that examined whether spouses already were similar at the time of their marriage (initial assortment), or became more similar over time (convergence). These studies found that initial assortment is primarily responsible for couple similarity (e.g., Glickson & Golan, 2001; Watson et al., 2004). Still, future research is needed to replicate the present findings using a longitudinal design. A design that includes a measurement of similarity in the beginning of the relationship and a measurement of marital outcomes and affect several years later would successfully address the issue of causal relations.

Finally, further broadening the range of domains on which similarity is examined may advance our understanding of the role of couple similarity in a relationship. Similarity in socioeconomic background, family history, cognitive skills, and a wide variety of attitudes and traits may all contribute to explaining relationship quality

and satisfaction. The findings of this study suggest that spousal similarity has important implications for marital satisfaction and partners' affect. Further research exploring how similarity on a wide range of domains affects various dimensions of relationships and psychological functioning will deepen our understanding of the processes underlying intimate relationships and their consequences for individuals' happiness.

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