

The big five test: how sustainable is a marriage?

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It goes without question that divorce can be a relentless stressor before, during, and after it occurs. The ramifications of divorce influence those directly and indirectly involved. While divorce is sluggishly declining, divorce rates still remain high(). As divorce rates increased in the 1960's and 1970's, researchers began to develop premarital intervention programs, such as a program named Prevention and Relationship Education Program (PREP) (Markman, Rhoades, Stanley & Peterson, 2013). Constructing programs, like PREP, enabled researchers to increase chances of happiness in relationships, therefore reducing divorces rates (Markman et al., 2013). These intervention programs reflected the findings of previous research that confirmed the difference between couples afflicted and not afflicted was a presence of negative interaction (Markman et al., 2013). Not only does that pattern detect a distressed marriage, but serves as an indicator of potential divorce before marriage (Markman et al., 2013). Throughout these empirical studies, it has been observed that key components of a healthy relationship have been neglected or even left out of marriages. This not only affects the couple, but has shown to be sever risk factors for children's issues in numerous domains (Markman et al., 2013) Therefore, many intervention programs fixate on strengthening conflict management, commitment, and communication. In doing this, marriage quality seemed to have been improved and impact marriages positively. These programs include Relationship Enhancement, Couples Communication, Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement, and PREP (Markman et al., 2013). There have been few studies that have examined whether or not relationship education rules out future divorce, but already-existing programs have shown to be effective in improving relationship and marital happiness

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(Markman et al., 2013). While divorce rates are declining, understanding the common denominator among unhealthy relationships and developing even more effective treatment programs to improve low-quality marriages may be the key to increasing the momentum of declining divorce rates.

In examining sustainability of marriages, researchers have found that personalities of partners and how they mechanically integrate is a vital factor in a successful marriage (Reid, Davis, & Green, 2013). Knowing this, it is understood that fruitful marriages are highly dependent on the dynamics of personality traits. Among many theories of personality that have progressed, one highly recognized and used is The Big Five model. This cross-cultural, widely-accepted test is comprised of and tests for 5 fundamental traits: neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Within marriages, neuroticism surfaced in many studies and has shown to be the most problematic personality trait. Due to lack of impulse control and stress coping, having high neuroticism will not help to sustain a marriage (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Regarding the remaining four personality traits, findings have shown to be somewhat inconsistent. However, additional studies have suggested openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness correlate positively with marital satisfaction (O'Rourke et al., 2011). Further studies discovered not only are personality traits vital for a marriage to thrive, but even similarity in personalities remarkably raises the quality of one's marriage. This introduces the Similarity/Attraction Theory (Klohn & Luo, 2003), which suggests people are attracted to those whom they are similar to in domains such as demographics, physical appearance, attitudes/personalities, social skills, etc. Fixating on attitude, Bryne and

Rhamey(1965) stated that there existed a proportional measurement of similarity and attraction, given the name The Law of Attraction (Kirchnen, Horton, & Montoya, 2008). Demonstrated and supported by immense laboratory data, this claim was indeed credible. Corresponding to this, even more theories purposed a difference in attitudes can lead to contention and avoidance, whereas attraction is promoted by similarity in personalities (Kirchnen, Horton, & Montoya, 2008). If researchers are able to identify whether or not similarity in personalities sustains marriages, new premarital intervention programs may be developed, allowing clarification and confirmation of one's feelings towards that individual's significant other by identifying what attracts them to their partner. Capella and Palmer (1992) reasoned that similarity lead to attraction simply because it offers perpetual reinforcement throughout the duration of the relationship or marriage, while at the same time gradually eliminating dissimilarity due to lack of reinforcement (Kirchnen, Horton, & Montoya, 2008) Although there are many different facets to attraction, it has been concluded within previous research that similarity generates appeal. The earlier we are able to develop programs that emphasize on personality likeness, the quicker this may have an effect on marriages and will potentially speed up the decline of divorce rates.

The key intention for this study is to examine the Similarity/Attraction Theory to measure the degree of similarity in attitudes it takes to have a sustainable marriage by administering the Big Five test to our participants and taking measurements to validate that similarity in attitudes does attract one with personality traits alike. Ultimately, higher similarity in attitude and in the Big

Five personality traits increases attraction level and sustains long-term relationships