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Communication within Romantic Relationships

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Communication within Romantic Relationships



Sarah Mackay Thesis Proposal Presentation
Supervised by Dr. Ken Cramer

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Overview

- Background
- Current Research
- Methodology
- Questions



Food for thought

Do you know a couple who have divorced?

Divorce rates in Canada in 2008 were 40.7%, and in Ontario 42.1%

(Statistics Canada, 2011)



Review of Literature

- Greater intimate relationship satisfaction is associated with;
 - Relationship stability and lower dissolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1992)
 - Higher levels of well-being, and mental and physical health (Beach, Katz, Kim & Brody, 2003; Prigerson, Maciejewski and Rosenheck, 1999)
- **Five-factor personality model** (Heller, Watson, & Iles, 2004; Gonzaga, Campos & Bradbury, 2007; Malouff, Thorstein, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke., 2010; Zentner, 2005), **Emotional Intelligence** (Brackett, Warner & Bosco, 2005; Malouff, Scutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014), **Self-disclosure** (Luster, Nelson, and Busby, 2013; Uysal, Lee Lin, Knee, and Bush; 2012).



- Core aspects of personality (Gosling et al., 2003)
- Meta-analysis found four characteristics had significant correlations with marital satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004)



Five-Factor Model

- ◉ Meta-Analysis with 3848 individuals found that four of the five-factor personality characteristics were significantly associated with the level of relationship satisfaction (Malouff et al., 2010)
- ◉ Low neuroticism, high agreeableness, high conscientiousness, and high extraversion
- ◉ Results did not vary significantly from men to women or from married to unmarried individuals
- ◉ Perception of congruence between individuals' ideal mate personality concepts and their partners personality predicted relationship outcomes (Zentner, 2005)



Emotional Intelligence

- ◉ Trait emotional intelligence (EI) added significantly to the big 5 characteristics in accounting for variance in partner relationship satisfaction (Joshi and Thingujam, 2009)
- ◉ Personality and emotion similarity is positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Gonzaga et al., 2007)
- ◉ Meta-analysis with 603 participants found a significant association between trait EI and romantic relationship satisfaction (Malouff et al., 2014)
- ◉ Couples where both partners have low EI had lowest relationship quality, and couples with either (or both) partners with high EI had higher relationship satisfaction (Brackett et al., 2005)



Self-disclosure

- Shyness was associated with lower levels of self and partner relationship satisfaction for both males and females; this relationship was mediated by communication behaviors (Luster et al., 2013)
- One's own shyness may be more influential on a partner's satisfaction than one's own satisfaction (Luster et al., 2013)
- Self concealment from one's partner was associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Uysale et al., 2012)
- Males romantic relationship satisfaction is greatest when males' self-disclosure is high, and female romantic relationship satisfaction is greatest when either (or both) partner's self-disclosure is high (Scapinello, 2004)



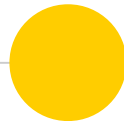
Communication

- Communication is an important determinant in relationship satisfaction (Meeks, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998)
- Communication can mediate between some individual characteristics and relationship outcomes (Luster et al., 2013)

Individual characteristic or behavior	How it is related to Communication
Extroversion	Sociable and talkative
Conscientiousness	Avoid confrontation, tend to be more reliable
Agreeableness	Compassionate, cooperative, compromise
Neuroticism (low)	Less reactive, calmer, better listeners
Emotional Intelligence	Empathetic, perceive unspoken emotion
Self-disclosure	Those who aren't disclosing aren't communicating

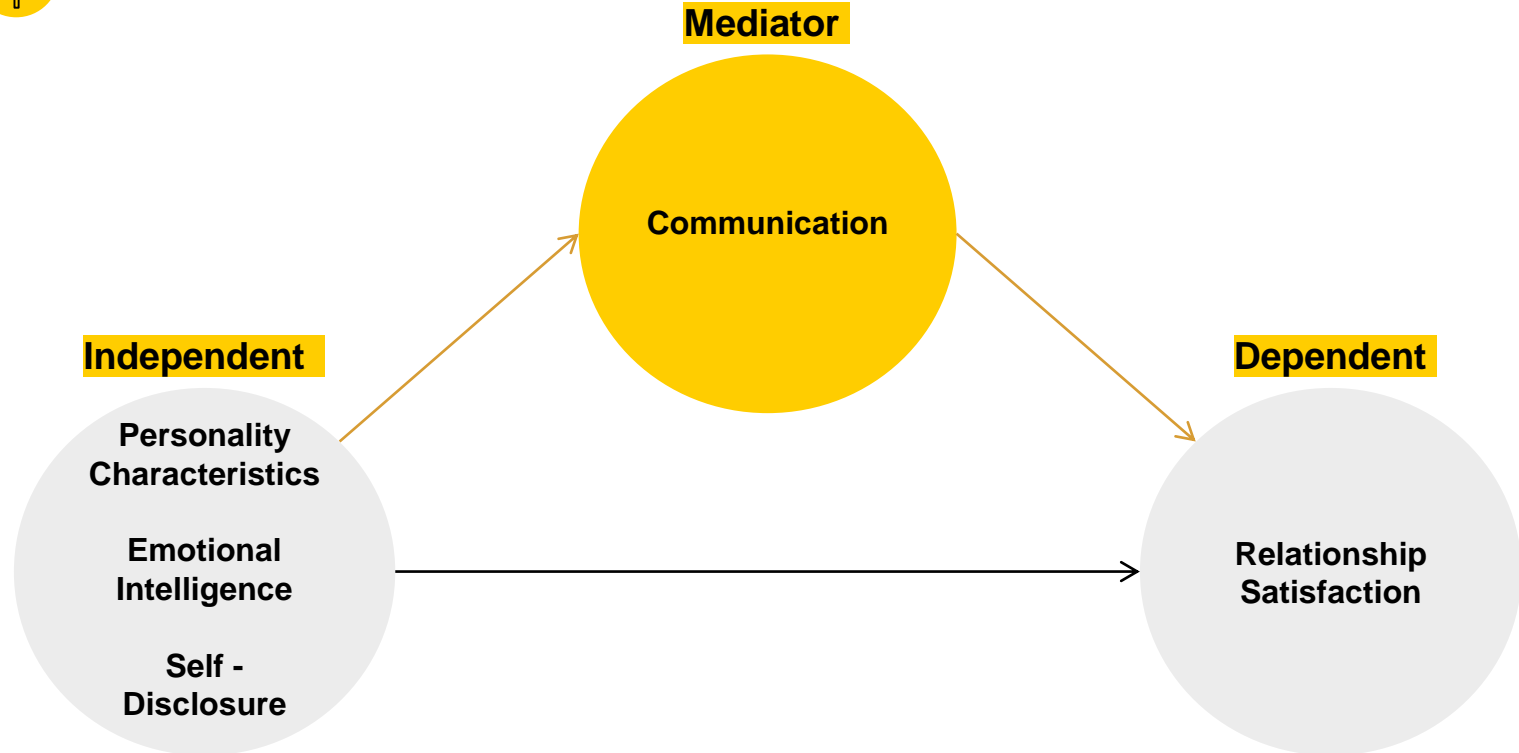
Research Questions

- Can we say that communication acts as a mediator in the relation between individual characteristics and relationship satisfaction?
 - personality characteristics
 - emotional intelligence
 - self-disclosure
- Are there gender differences in regards to this mediation?
- Does a high degree of congruence within couples individual characteristics influence relationship satisfaction?





Variables and model



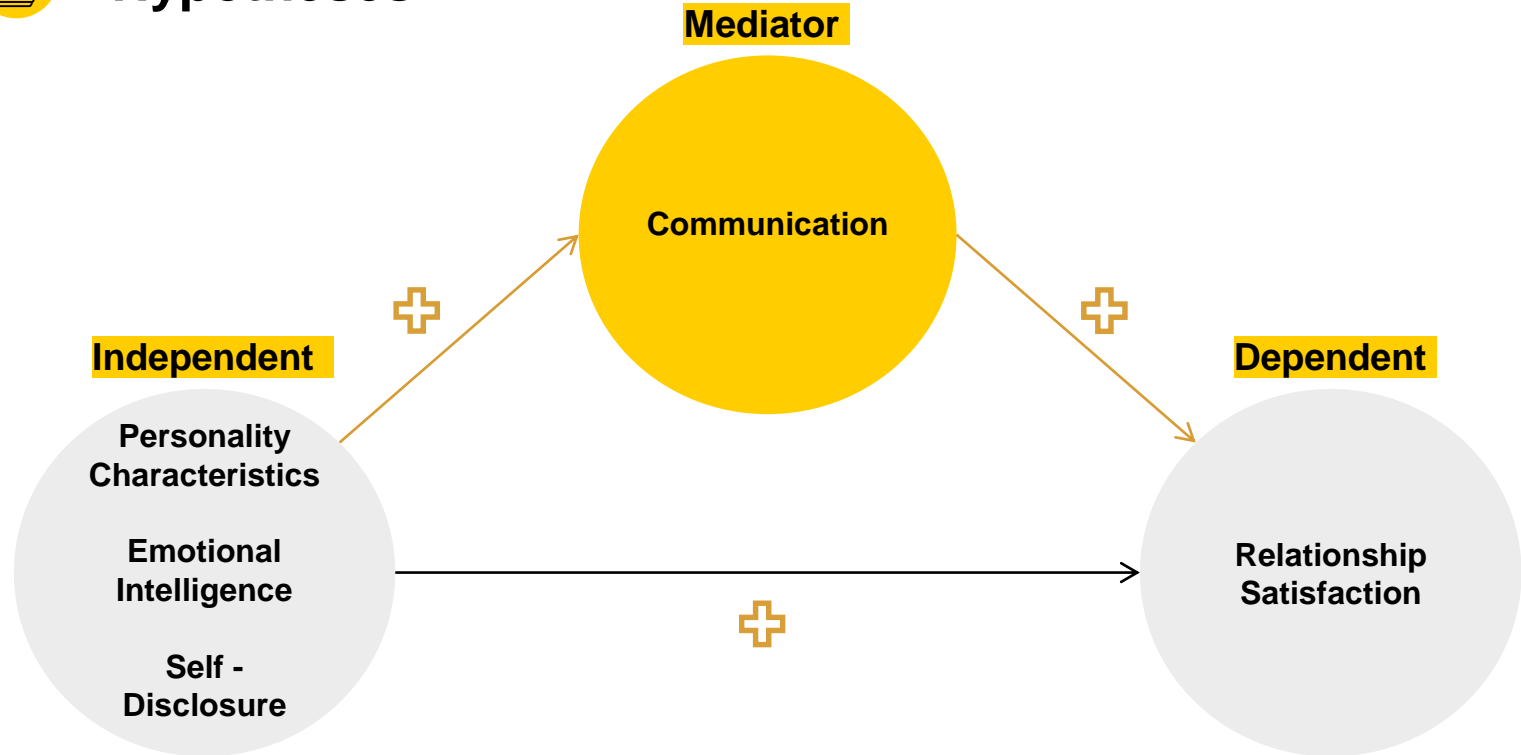


Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Communication will mediate the relationship between relationship satisfaction and low neuroticism, and high conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness.
- Hypothesis 2: Communication will mediate the relation between emotional intelligence and relationship satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 3: Communication will mediate the relation between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction.



Hypotheses





Methodology

Sample

- 100 heterosexual couples (200 participants)
- Equal number of male and female participants
- University of Windsor Undergraduates and their partners
- **Exclusion criteria:** in a heterosexual romantic relationship that began 3+ months ago
- Couples in short-term relationships have not evaluated their partners individual characteristics, or have not had time to do so accurately (Brackett et al., 2005)

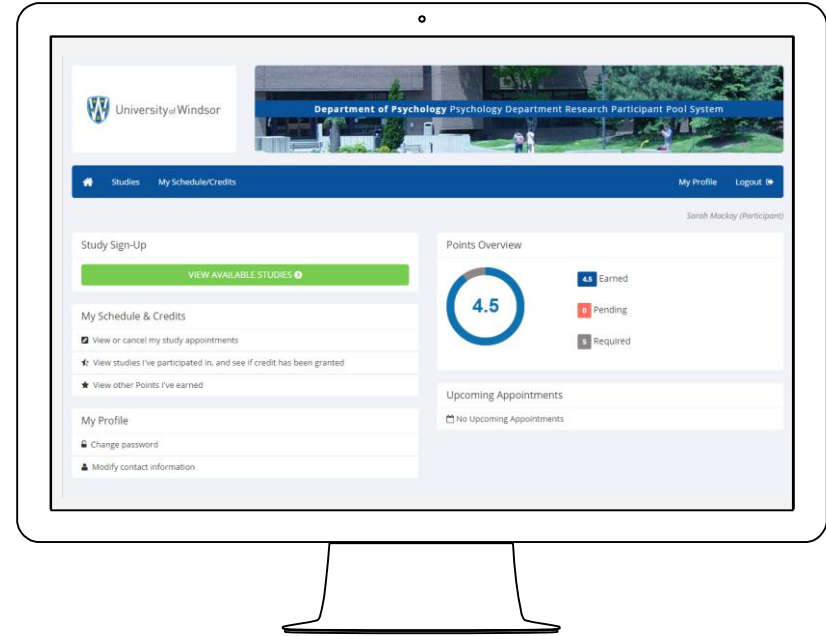


Methodology

Procedure

-Participants obtained through the **Psychology Department Research Participant Pool System**

-Contacted via e-mail with codes for each partner and link to **Fluid Surveys**





Methodology

Procedure cont.





Methodology

Procedure cont.

- **Important instructions**
 - Informed Consent- completed separately from partner
 - Letter of information- don't discuss it until your partner has completed the fluid survey
- No more than 30 minutes to complete
- Participants in the pool receive **0.5 bonus marks**
- Partner entered in a **\$50.00 Gift Card** draw



Methodology measures

Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

Developed by:

- Gosling et al. (2003)
- 10 item measure
- 5pt Likert scale *

-measures: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability

Self-Rated Emotional Intelligence Scale – revised (SREIS)

Developed by:

- Brackett et al., 2006
- 19 item measure
- 5pt Likert scale

-measures: perceived, use, understanding and managing emotion, as well as social management of emotion

The Self-Disclosure Index

Developed by:

- Miller et al. (1983)
- 10 item measure
- 5pt Likert scale

-measures: tendency to “open up” or elicit intimate disclosure from others

All questionnaires have shown internal consistency and reliability



Methodology measures

Relationship

Communication Measure

Adapted from:

-Isaki, Emi, & Harmon, 2015;
and Begley et al., 2015

-30 item measure

-5pt Likert scale

-measures: quality of
communication with their partner

Relationship

Assessment Scale

Developed by:

-Hendrick (1988)

-7 item measure

-5pt Likert scale

-measure- of relationship
satisfaction

Demographics

-age

-gender

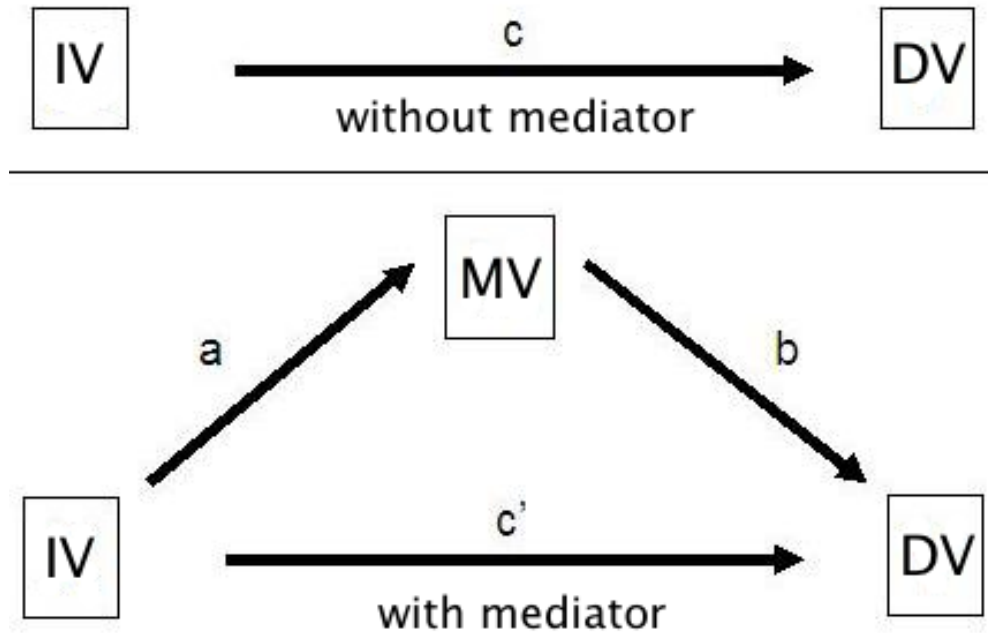
-length of relationship

-proximity to partner

All questionnaires have shown internal consistency and reliability



Data Analysis

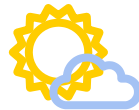


(Tsang, 2015)



Thank you for listening!

Any questions ?





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