Role repertory grid variables and their relationship to marital satisfaction.

Gregory R. Meloche
University of Windsor

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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NOUS L'AVONS RECUE
ROLE REPERTORY GRID VARIABLES
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO
MARITAL SATISFACTION

by
Gregory R. Meloche

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
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Abstract

The research literature on marital adjustment has indicated the importance of certain psychological variables to the functioning of a married couple. The purpose of the present study was to determine whether a number of psychological variables, as measured by a free response perception test would be associated with a person's perception of the satisfactoriness of his/her marital relationship. It was proposed that the following variables would be related to marital satisfaction: a positive evaluation of one's self, a positive evaluation of one's spouse, the perception of one's spouse as similar to one's self, the male's perceived similarity of himself to his father, and the wife's perception of similarity between her husband and her father. In addition it was proposed that the validity of these hypotheses would support the contention that a free-response method of eliciting subject responses yields data consistent with that elicited by a fixed-response method.

The subjects for the present study were ten volunteer couples who had been together as a couple for a minimum of 1.5 years. Each subject completed a modified version of the Role Repertory Grid (RRG) and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). A correlation analysis was then done between selected standardized distance scores from the RRG and six MSI scale scores from each subject.
The results indicated that a positive evaluation of one's spouse, the perception of similarity between one's spouse and one's self, and the male's perception of similarity between himself and his father are related to marital satisfaction. No evidence was found to support the other two hypotheses. Some support was also found for the proposition that free-response and fixed-response methods yield data consistent with each other. Possible explanations for the results were explored and suggestions for further research presented.
Preface

This study was undertaken as a result of the author's interest in General Systems Theory of which George Kelly's work is a part, as well as an interest in the much battered institution of marriage.

I wish to thank Dr. P. Daly, Dr. R. Orr and Dr. C. Vincent for serving on my committee and for their constructive criticism of this work.

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Introduction

Much of our everyday life is spent in contact with other people. We play and work with people, some of whom we know quite well, and others who are just faceless strangers. And yet beneath the overtly varied nature of our relationships there lies a common element: our attempt to understand and anticipate the behavior of the people we are involved with. This ranges from the expectation of a banal "Good morning" from a co-worker, to knowing whether a friend will enjoy a particular movie or not, to predicting which member of a group could be counted on in a crisis. In addition our anticipations are used to guide and modify our own intended behavior. Therefore, social behavior in general can be conceived of as the interaction of anticipatory systems. This anticipatory system is known as an implicit personality theory or a person perception system. An assumptive cornerstone of the present research is that an individual's person perception system is crucial in determining the nature and quality of his/her everyday interactions with people and therefore that this system is a primary determinant of the enduring and intense interactions which occur in the marital relationship. An extension of the above proposition is that this same system is a primary determinant of the enduring and
intense transactions which occur in the marital relationship. Therefore it was hoped that the study of the perceptual systems of spouses would lead to a better understanding of the psychological factors involved in a satisfying marriage.

**Psychological Factors Involved in Marriage**

Much of the early research in the area of marital satisfaction consisted of the compilation of those demographic characteristics associated with long lasting marriages. For example, Ferguson, (1938) used a self report questionnaire to collect data relating to marital economics, family background, husband's vocation, education, sexual adjustment and sexual experiences. This and other researches like it pointed out the importance of similar cultural backgrounds to the development of a satisfying marriage. However, a large body of research exists today which indicates that the interaction of the personalities of the spouses is a much better predictor of marital satisfaction than are the demographics. For example, Dicks (1967) has indicated that while differing cultural backgrounds and personal values and norms may account for some marital difficulties, the main source is a psychological variable, i.e., the interaction of the couple's emotional/behavioral sets, particularly those sets developed through interactions with their respective parents.
In related research Kreitman (1962 and 1968) investigated the effect of the marital relationship on the psychological character of the individual and concluded that spouses resemble each other significantly in terms of evident neurosis. There is also evidence to suggest that this similarity is the result of interaction over time rather than an initial selection of a partner of like psychological makeup (Kreitman 1968, Kreitman et al. 1970). A similarity between the characteristics and attributes of spouses and the stability of the marriage is also well documented (Tharp 1963). However, the importance of complimentary role relationships to a stable marriage, while supported by some writers (e.g. Winch 1958), is not so well documented.

Up to this point we have examined research which supports in the most general way, the importance of psychological variables to the state of a couple's marriage. We now turn to researches which deal with specific variables. Dymond (1953) and Murstein & Beck (1972) found that the level of marital adjustment was significantly correlated with the similarity of the spouses, a conclusion supported by the demographic research. Murstein & Beck (1972), using a bipolar adjective check list also found that individuals who were self accepting had a better adjustment than those low on self acceptance. Apparently those people who felt good about themselves were, in general, also likely to feel good about themselves in relation to their marriage.
In a related study, Schafer & Braito (1979), using an interview format with married couples, concluded that those couples with successful marriages also have good self-concepts. This conclusion was confirmed and extended by Lundgren et al. (1980) using a bipolar check list. They found that low anxiety among married couples, which is correlated with satisfying marriages, was related to a positive self-evaluation and a positive evaluation of one's spouse. The inverse of this was investigated by Frank et al. (1980). It was found that marital difficulty was correlated with a perceived discrepancy between one's self and ideal self, and between one's spouse and ideal spouse.

The importance of parental influence on mate selection has been known for many years and has become a commonly accepted fact. In a study conducted by Luckey (1960) some of these truisms were confirmed though others were not. Using the Interpersonal Check List, Luckey found that parents do have a significant effect on the success of a marriage. For women, successful marriage is correlated with a high degree of perceived similarity between their husbands and their fathers while for men the similarity is between themselves and their fathers. Interestingly, the wife's perceived similarity between herself and her mother and the husband's perception of similarity between his wife and his mother has proven non-significant. It has been hypothesised that this result is due to the changing
role of women in our culture and the relative stability and higher valuation of the male role.

**Person Perception**

An individual's person perception system, in the broadest sense, consists of those conceptual categories, both conscious and subconscious, which determine that person's understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. It is an outgrowth of an individual's interactions with people. Consequently it is under constant testing and revision. It is determined to a large extent by those relationships which impinge on a person's life most. Thus the theory will in some way come to reflect the nature of these relationships, one of which will most certainly be the marital relationship. The applicability of person perceptions to the study of marriage is well established and has been supported by phenomenologists, self theorists and social psychologists for many years (Dai, 1952; Heider, 1944; Ichheiser, 1949; Lewin, 1935; Rogers, 1951; Sarbin, 1954; Sullivan, 1949).

It is unlikely that a person could, even if it were desirable, explicitly define his or her beliefs and/or specify their interrelationships so as to present a coherent and logically consistant theory. Thus psychologists have developed strategies for eliciting information from which the individual's theory can be inferred. The information usually takes the form of the
individual's description of people and his/her expectations of interpersonal interaction. Since the person perception system is derived from the subject's descriptions of others rather than taken from explicit statements about the system, it is also referred to as an implicit personality theory. Psychologists have developed a number of methodological strategies for eliciting information concerning the content and range of an individual's conceptual categories. One popular strategy, referred to as the fixed format method, uses researcher defined check lists. Subjects are provided with a list of adjectives and are instructed to check off those which are applicable to a list of people known to the subject. In general the fixed format method has been criticized (Gage & Cronback, 1955) as being too restrictive in that it limits the person's responses to those categories chosen by the experimenter, and may not include categories of great importance to the person asked to use them. In addition it may be that imbedded in the construction of such scales are the experimenter's implicit assumptions about the structure and nature of personality theory. If so this would result in a contamination of the data collected which would be impossible to remove.

An alternative to the fixed format procedure is the free response technique, in which people are allowed to choose their own categories. A number of writers (Hastorf, Richardson & Dornbusch, 1958; Kelly, 1955; Rosenberg & Sedlak, 1972), have advocated the free response method in
the belief that it allows the person to express information about his/her unique categories and their interrelationships, which would not be elicited under the more rigid, fixed format method. However, the analysis of this type of data has usually been limited to determining the nature of those categories common to all people (e.g. Beach & Wertheimer, 1961; Dornbusch et al., 1965). Due to its acceptance as a free response person perception test it was decided to use Kelly's (1955) Role Repertory Grid Test in the present study to elicit information about the psychological factors under present study.

**Personal Construct Theory**

Kelly's theory of Personal Constructs (1955) is an attempt to understand the development of the individual's personal system for construing and acting on the world. Man is conceived of as an initiator of action, an organism which acts on the environment, and collects information about the effect of that act so as to be better able to predict his environment in the future. Man is seen, not as an organism whose behavior is determined by the presence or absence of external reinforcers, nor by the prodding of biological drives, but as an individual who acts upon the world, and who has developed an organized way of understanding the world by giving it personal meaning.

In the language of Kelly's theory, man comes to understand his world and give it meaning through the act of
construing. To construe an event is to give the event personal meaning. The personal meaning attributed to an event is determined by the individual's way of interpreting it which in turn is the result of his/her experiences with similar events and their effects in his/her past. The individual rules of construing in a person's system are called constructs. The term construct is sometimes used as though it meant the same thing as category, concept, or definition. For Kelly, the essential characteristic missing from these labels is 'bipolarity'. The ideas of category, concept and definition all carry the notion that the nature of a thing can be explained by listing the characteristics associated with it. Kelly argues that we know a thing not only by those characteristics associated with it, but also by those which are dissociated from it. What a thing is contrasted with is as important to the understanding of that thing as are those things perceived as similar to it. For example, the meaning of 'happy' when contrasted with 'sad' is very different from the meaning of 'happy' when contrasted with 'angry'.

Constructs are developed through experience with things or 'elements'. Slater (1969) argues that neither constructs nor elements are logically prior, since constructs can be understood in terms of elements just as easily as elements can be understood in terms of constructs. However, Kelly (1955) clearly believes that constructs are logically prior, although not necessarily chronologically prior.
To construe an event is to pose a question. It is to ask, 'Is my interpretation of what is happening here accurate? That is, does it allow me to predict what will follow and if it does not, what new information is available which will increase the usefulness of my predictions?' Implied in the last statement is the assumption that the rules a person uses to construe events are open to modification. They comprise a system which develops through experience but never reaches a completed state. Its development is similar to that of a scientific theory: hypothesis, test, hypothesis, test, etc. The latest hypothesis is not taken to be the truth, but only a best approximation of such based on available evidence.

Constructs are not unlimited in their applicability, just as a particular behavior is not appropriate to all situations. They have a limited range of convenience. To return to the previous example, the construct 'happy-sad' might have a range of convenience limited to children. A child is seen as happy, sad, or something in between. The construct may not be used in connection with adults because experience, for this hypothetical person, has shown that predictions about adults based on this construct are not useful. However, predictions for adults based on the construct 'happy-angry' may have proved useful and will be used in connection with them.

Each person has a set of constructs he/she uses in his/her efforts to construe his/her environment. These constructs do not exist in isolation, nor in some random
grouping like marbles in a jar. Rather, they form an integrated hierarchical structure, with those constructs higher up subsuming those beneath it. This structure too, is open to modification based on experience and establishes a state which is specific enough to allow for the discrimination of events and yet general enough to assimilate novel information.

The individual will experience difficulty if there is a move in either direction away from this optimal state. Constriction of the construct system is said to occur when the person is unable to assimilate new information into their system because the constructs have an extremely limited range of convenience. Any information which does not fit is ignored so as to maintain the stability of the system. The opposite extreme is called dilation. In this case the constructs have become so loose that preciseness in discrimination is lost. The person's behavior takes on a monotonic quality due to his/her inability to make meaningful distinctions between one situation and another.

Role Repertory Grid Technique

As was stated earlier, an outgrowth of Kelly's Personal Construct Theory was the development of a free response method for eliciting information about an individual's personal construct system (re.: implicit personality theory). This method will hereafter be referred to as the Role Repertory Grid Technique (RRGT).
Through this technique he hoped to elicit a representative sample of a person's constructs. The most essential aspect of this technique is its ideographic nature; providing information about the individual's construct system without the distorting effect of referencing it to some normative sample. In addition, the concomitant analysis allows for the assessment of the relationships between constructs, between significant people in a person's life (elements) and between the constructs and elements.

In its original form subjects were provided with a list of approximately twenty role titles (e.g. Authority Person, Best Friend) and asked to supply the name of a personal acquaintance for each title. Random groupings of three role titles (triads) were then made, such that each role title was used an approximately equal number of times. From each triad, the subject was asked to specify how two of the people named were similar and at the same time different from the third; these two descriptors combining to create a construct. This method was used in order to remain consistent with Kelly's notion of the bipolar nature of constructs. Each role-title/person was then rated on a 7-point scale on each construct. The RRCT is essentially a complex sorting task which yields the data in a matrix format, a simplified example of which is contained in Appendix A. Many methods have been developed for analyzing the resulting matrix, two of which are Kelly's own non-parametric factor analysis and Slater's (1964) principle component analysis.
The raw data from the RRC in the present study was analysed using Slater's (1964) principle component analysis. One of the resulting statistics from such an analysis is the standardized distance score. This statistic was used extensively in the present study and is explained in the following paragraphs.

Each RRC element has associated with it, 20 numbers: its ratings on each construct. Taken together, the numbers define the element's position in reference to the constructs. Because each element on a person's RRC is also defined in this way, it is possible to calculate the mathematical distance between any two elements on the same grid. An average distance score is calculated by summing all possible distance scores on a grid and dividing by the number of distance scores. A standardized distance score, the statistic used in this study, is calculated by dividing a distance score by the average distance score.

The standardized distance score is a measure of how similar the subject perceives the two elements to be to each other. Small standardized distance scores (i.e. 0.9 or lower) indicate that the two elements are rated similarly. Large standardized distance scores (i.e. 1.01 or higher) indicate that the two elements are rated differently. The assumption is that those elements rated similarly by the subject are perceived by him/her to be alike while those elements rated differently are perceived to be unlike each other.

It is important not to interpret small standardized
distance scores as implying a positive evaluation. There are no valences associated with the scores. They are simply measures of perceived similarity. This is why an element with a known valence is usually included in a RRG. In this case Ideal Self was used. It acts as a reference point on the grid for evaluating other elements. The Ideal Self is rated on those poles of the constructs most valued by the subject. Therefore, other elements which are similarly rated will have a small standardized distance between themselves and the Ideal Self and also have associated with them those constructs valued by the subject.

Subsequent research has shown that Kelly's technique has certain advantages consistent with his theory. First, constructs elicited in this way appear to be a representative sample of a person's construct system. Hunt (1951) found that approximately 70% of a person's constructs were repeated when retested after one week. In the same study Hunt also found that the number of constructs at a person's disposal is limited to about twenty or thirty. This finding was confirmed by Bieri and Blacker (1956) and indicates that the method taps a limited system and does not simply generate a voluminous verbal response. A finding which has implications for all nomothetic tests involving a standardized construct list is that constructs elicited individually are perceived by subjects to be more personally meaningful than are supplied constructs (Mannister & Fransella, 1967).
There has been some research in which the RRGT has been used to explore the relationships of couples, (Bannister and Bott, 1973; Wijesinghe and Wood, 1976; Childs & Hedges, 1980). Most notably Ryle (1975) has developed a 'double dyad grid' which is a variant of the RRGT described above. 'One of the changes is the replacement of the role titles with reciprocal relationships: e.g. 'you in relation to your spouse' and 'your spouse in relation to you'. Constructs are also phrased in such a way as to depict an interaction; e.g. 'defensive' might take the form 'defends against'. A major change is that four versions of the test are completed, two by each member of the couple—one for the self and one attempting to predict the responses of the spouse.

Ryle and Breen (1972a) used their grid in a comparison of 'maladjusted' couples (i.e. one or both members having consulted for problems centering on the relationship) and 'control' couples. The results indicate that the maladjusted couples were more likely than the control couples to cast the self in the role of child and the spouse in the role of parent. Also, as the couple perceived the relationship to become worse, the self was seen to become more child-like and the spouse to become less parental. This was illustrated in a case study by Ryle and Breen (1972b) of a couple in conjoint therapy.
The study also showed how the interpretation of a double dyad grid "can indicate areas of similarity and/or difference; and can indicate areas of misperception and communication failure" (Ryle & Breen, 1972b, p. 385).
Statement of the Problem

Much of the data for research in the area of marital satisfaction has been collected by way of questionnaire and researcher-defined rating scales and check lists. These researches have led to the acceptance of the importance of certain psychological variables in determining the nature of a marital relationship. In light of criticisms leveled against the fixed format method, the purpose of the present study was to determine if selected psychological variables, which have been found to be related to the state of a marriage when measured by a fixed format method, would prove significant when tested using a free response method, i.e. Kelly's (1955) RRGT.

With this in mind and on the basis of the research previously cited, the hypotheses for the present study were selected.

1. How a person feels about him/herself is generally accepted as an important factor in understanding that person's functioning. Previous research has indicated the relevance of self concept to marital satisfaction, therefore, in the present study it was hypothesized that subjects who reported having a positive or good self concept would also report a high degree of marital satisfaction while those subjects who reported having a negative or poor self concept would report a low degree of marital satisfaction.
In the present study a positive evaluation of the self is defined in reference to the subject's conceptualization of his/her ideal self. The ideal self is a concept which has proven over and over to be of value to psychologists. It can be defined simply as that imaginary person who possesses those characteristics we value most. Obviously each person's ideal self is uniquely his/her own, defined quantitatively and qualitatively by the valued characteristics, therefore, a positive evaluation of the self was made in reference to the individual's ideal self. This was accomplished by way of two standardized distance scores selected from the RRC: the distance between the elements Self and Ideal Self and the distance between the elements Self with Spouse and Ideal Self with Spouse. As with all standardized scores a small distance score indicates that the two elements were rated similarly on average across the subject's constructs. A large score indicates that the two elements were rated dissimilarly. It is assumed that a small standardized distance score indicates a positive evaluation of the self and a large score indicates a less positive evaluation.

2. When one person evaluates another positively it is reasonable to assume that at least part of the positive evaluation is due to the person's gratification arising from interactions with the other. The research has borne this out. A person whose evaluation of his/her spouse is positive is also likely to report being satisfied with
his/her marriage. In the present study it was hypothesized that those subjects who evaluated their spouses positively would report a high degree of marital satisfaction while those who evaluated their spouses in a more negative light would report a low degree of marital satisfaction.

For the purposes of the present study the evaluation of the spouse was measured by the RRC standardized distance score between the elements Spouse with You and Ideal Spouse with You. Similar ratings of these two elements by the subject of his/her constructs results in a small standardized distance score and is taken to indicate a positive evaluation of the spouse. Dissimilar ratings result in a large score and is interpreted as a less positive evaluation of the spouse.

3. Previous research has also indicated the relevance of spousal similarity to marital satisfaction. Spouses who see themselves as similar are also likely to report satisfaction within their marriages. In the present study it was therefore hypothesized that subjects who perceived themselves as being similar to their spouses would also report satisfaction with their marriages while those who saw themselves and their spouses as dissimilar would report little satisfaction with their marriages.

In this instance spousal similarity was measured by two RRC standardized distance scores: the distance between the elements Self with Spouse and Spouse with You and the distance between the elements Self and Spouse with Others.
Small distance scores are taken to indicate a high amount of similarity between spouses and large scores taken to indicate a low amount of similarity.

4. The male's perception of similarity between himself and his father has been found to be related to marital satisfaction. Presumably, this relates to such things as sexual identification, role modelling, presence of the father within the family, etc. Therefore, the hypothesis for the present study was that males who perceived themselves to be similar to their fathers would also report a high degree of marital satisfaction, while those who saw themselves and their fathers as dissimilar would report a low degree of marital satisfaction.

Male-father similarity was measured in the present study by two standardized distance scores from the males' RRC's: the standardized distance score between the elements Self and Father and by the standardized distance score between the elements Self with Spouse and Father. Small distance scores are taken to indicate a high amount of similarity between the male and his father. Large scores are taken to indicate a low amount of similarity.

5. The female's perception of similarity between her spouse and her father has been found to be related to her satisfaction with her marriage, again attesting to the importance of parental relationships to functioning in later life. Therefore it was hypothesized that females who
perceived their spouses and fathers to be similar would also report a high degree of marital satisfaction while those females who perceived little similarity would report little marital satisfaction.

Similarity between the wife's husband and her father was measured by the female's RRC standardized distance score between the elements Spouse with You and Father. A small standardized distance score was interpreted as indicating high similarity between the wife's husband and her father while large scores were interpreted as indicating low similarity.

6. The hypotheses stated above were taken from research using fixed format methods. They were tested in the present study using a free response method. It is hypothesized that the results from this study pertaining to hypotheses one through five will confirm the results of the previous research. Confirmation will be taken to mean significant results in at least three of the five hypotheses.
Method

Subjects

The subjects for the present study were 10 volunteer couples from the Windsor area. Each couple selected had been married or living together as a married couple for a minimum of 1.5 years. The length of the marriages ranged from 1.5 years to 15 years with a mean of 5.3 years. Of the women, three had a previous marriage as had four of the men. The mean age of the women was 31.3 years and ranged from 26 to 52 years. The mean age of the men was slightly higher at 31.9 years and ranged from 24 to 60 years. All subjects, with the exception of two men had at least some post secondary education. Five couples had children ranging in age from 1 to 6 years with a mean of 4.2 years.

Instruments

The materials used in the present study include the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), (Snyder, 1979), and a modified version of Kelly's Role Repertory Grid (RRG), (Kelly, 1955).

The MSI contains 280 true-false items measuring marital satisfaction. It consists of one global affective scale, one validity scale and nine non-overlapping scales dealing with specific areas of marital adjustment. The following paragraphs contain descriptions of each scale including
sample items. These have been quoted directly from Snyder (1979).

1. Conventionalization (CNV)-The items comprising this validity scale developed by Edmonds (1967) reflect the tendency of subjects to distort the appraisals of their marriages in socially desirable directions. ("There is never a moment that I do not feel 'head over heels' in love with my mate." "My mate completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.").

2. Global Distress (GDS)-Items reflect the individual's overall dissatisfaction with the marriage. ("My marriage has been disappointing in several ways." "The future of our marriage is too uncertain to make any serious plans.").

3. Affective Communication (AFC)-Items assess the individual's general dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by the spouse. ("My spouse doesn't take me seriously enough sometimes." "I'm sure my spouse has never really loved me.").

4. Problem-Solving Communication (PSC)-Items assess the ineffectiveness of problem solving communication and an ability to resolve disagreements. ("Minor disagreements with my
spouse often end up in big arguments." "My spouse and I seem to be able to go for days without settling our differences.")

5. Time Together (TTO) - Items reflect a lack of common interests and dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together. ("My spouse and I don't have much in common to talk about." "About the only time I'm with my spouse is at meals and bed-time.")

6. Disagreement About Finances (FIN) - Items assess reported disagreement about the management of family finances. ("My spouse buys too many things without consulting with me first." "It is often hard for my spouse and me to discuss our finances without getting upset with each other.")

7. Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) - Items assess dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity. ("My spouse sometimes shows too little enthusiasm for sex." "My spouse has too little regard sometimes for my sexual satisfaction.")

8. Role Orientation (ROR) - Items measure the adoption of a traditional versus nonconventional orientation toward marital and parental sex-roles.
Items are scored in the direction of nonconventionality. ("There should be more daycare centers and nursery schools so that more mothers of young children could work." "A wife should not have to give up her job when it interferes with her husband's career.")

9. Family History of Distress (FAM) - Items reflect reports of an unhappy childhood and disharmony in the marriages of the subject's parents and extended family. ("I was very anxious as a young person to get away from my family." "My parents didn't communicate with each other as well as they should have.")

10. Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC) - Items reflect parental dissatisfaction or disappointment with children. ("Having children has not brought all of the satisfactions I had hoped it would." "My children rarely seem to care how I feel about things.")

11. Conflict Over Childrearing (COR) - Items assess spousal conflict regarding childrearing practices. ("My spouse and I seem to argue more frequently since having children." "My spouse doesn't assume his (her) fair share of taking care of the children.") Snyder (1979) p. 816.
All examples are keyed in the 'true' direction.

Kelly's original Role Repertory grid consisted of 20 role titles as does the grid used in the present study. However, some modifications were made in order to simplify the test and adapt to the needs of the present study.

First, some of the role titles were reworded to make them more understandable (i.e., Ideal Self became You as you would like to be). Others were added to reflect the relational component of a role (i.e., You when with your spouse). All 20 role titles are listed below.

1) You as you are now (Self)
2) You as you would like to be (Ideal Self)
3) You when with your spouse (Self with Spouse)
4) How you would like to be when with your spouse (Ideal Self with Spouse)
5) Your spouse when with you (Spouse with You)
6) How you would like your spouse to be with you (Ideal Spouse with You)
7) Your spouse when with other people (Spouse with Others)
8) Your mother
9) Your father
10) Someone you can trust
11) Someone you feel threatened by
12) Someone you think of as a happy person
13) Someone who dislikes you
14) Your best friend
15) Someone you think of as a person in authority
16) Someone you pity
17) Someone you dislike
18) Someone who has rejected you
19) Someone you think of as being successful
20) Someone you think of as moral or ethical

Those titles contained in brackets were not present on the original Role Form and are included here as abbreviations which are used in the text when referring to these role titles.

Second, the method of elicit ing constructs was changed. In Kelly's original method subjects were required to compare and contrast selected elements in order to generate constructs. While this method is logically consistent with the nature of constructs, it is difficult to argue the necessity of making a subconscious process conscious. Therefore, in order to simplify the elicitation of constructs subjects were asked to state the most important characteristic for each element and then to state its opposite.

Procedure

Couples arrived together for the testing sessions. After a general briefing about the nature of the tasks to follow, i.e. the MSI and RRG, one member of the couple was shown to a separate room and instructed in how to complete the MSI. The MSI was administered in its standard form. He/she was left alone to complete this task while the
administrator returned to the other subject and administered the RRC. The experimenter recorded the elements and constructs on the appropriate forms, instructed the subject in how to make the ratings and left the subject to complete the test. For a detailed description of the RRC administration procedure see Appendix B.

When the subjects completed the test they were working on, they were administered the other test. The order of test administration was balanced across the sex of the subjects.

The analysis consisted of three stages: 1) the MSI's were hand-scored and the raw scores converted to t-scores. Although the test was administered to each subject in its standard format in order to retain the reliability and validity of the test, only those scale scores which appeared to relate directly to the couple's relationship with each other were used in the present study. The six scales are Conventionalization, Global Distress, Affective Communication, Problem-Solving Communication, Time Together and Sexual Dissatisfaction. 2) each subject's responses on the RRC were analysed using a principle components (P.C.) technique (Slater, 1964) and the relevant standardized distance scores selected out. 3) using correlation statistics with the subjects grouped by sex, the correlations between each standardized distance score and the six MSI variables were calculated.
Results

The following section presents an analysis of the data collected. It contains two sections, the first presenting some descriptive statistics about the state of the subjects' marriages as indicated by their MSI scores and the second presenting those results directly relevant to the hypotheses.

A summary of the MSI scale scores for both males and females is contained in Table 1. According to the test norms t-scores below 50 are low, t-scores 50 to 70 are average and t-scores above 70 are high. In all cases with the exception of the Conventionalization scale, the scales are scored in the direction of discontent. High scores on the Conventionalization scale indicate a naive, uncritical evaluation of the marriage while low scores indicate a more negative evaluation of the marriage.

Subject t-scores in the present study fell mostly in the low to average ranges with an occasional t-score appearing in the high range. A comparison of the t-scores for males and females reveals the great similarity in their responses. An exception to this is on the Sexual Dissatisfaction scale where males reported a high degree of dissatisfaction and females scored in the average range. On average the subjects report being relatively satisfied with their marriages.
### Table 1

Summary of MSI Scale Scores by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSI Scales</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MIN. Score</th>
<th>MAX. Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNV</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDS</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTO</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNV</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDS</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTO</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 1: Positive Self Concept**

**Males**

Positive Self Concept was measured by two standardized distance scores, the Self - Ideal Self distance and the Self with Spouse - Ideal Self with Spouse distance. Both distances were correlated with each of the six MSI scales. The probabilities of all the correlations were above the .05 level of significance. No evidence was found to support the hypothesis that a male's self concept is related to marital satisfaction as measured in the present study.
Females

The same two standardized distance scores used to evaluate the males' self concept were also used to evaluate the self concept of the females. Again, all probabilities were found to be above the .05 level of significance. No evidence was found to support the hypothesis that a female's self concept is related to marital satisfaction as measured in the present study.

Hypothesis 2: Positive Evaluation of Spouse

Males

The subject's evaluation of his spouse was measured by the standardized distance score between the elements Spouse with You and Ideal Spouse with You. Two of the six MSI scales were significantly correlated with this distance score. These scales were Affective Communication and Problem Solving Communication with the latter having a higher probability coefficient and significance level (see Table 2). Small distance scores which are taken to indicate that the husband's perception of his wife closely matches his notion of an ideal wife are positively correlated to the two MSI scales sensitive to satisfaction with different types of communication patterns within the relationship. Large distance scores, which indicate little similarity between the husband's perception of his spouse and ideal
spouse are positively correlated with dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by the spouse. The hypothesis is confirmed for males. A positive evaluation of the spouse is related to marital satisfaction.

**Females**

The MSI scales significantly correlated with the Spouse with You – Ideal Spouse with You standardized distance score are Global Distress, Affective Communication and Sexual Dissatisfaction (see Table 2).

Females who perceive their husbands to be fulfilling their expectations of a spouse (and thus are positively evaluated) also express an overall satisfaction with their marriage. They are satisfied with the amount of affection expressed by their spouses and are satisfied with the frequency and quality of sexual activity. Females who see their spouses in a less positive light tend to report a general dissatisfaction with the marriage and problems in the areas of affective communication and sexual activity.

The hypothesis is confirmed in the case of females. A positive evaluation of the spouse is related to marital satisfaction.
Table 2

Relationship Between Evaluation of Spouse and MSI Scales by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>MSI-Scale</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>&lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>GDS</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFG</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Although 12 correlations were calculated only those significant at .05 level or better are listed.

Hypothesis 3: Similarity to Spouse

Males

The subject's evaluation of the amount of similarity between himself and his spouse was measured in two ways.

The Self with Spouse - Spouse with You standardized distance score is probably the closest to a conventional definition of similarity between spouses. It refers to the degree of similarity perceived on the basis of day to day interactions with each other. Small distances are assumed to indicate that the subject perceives a high degree of similarity between himself and his spouse. Larger distances indicate that the subject sees himself as quite different from his spouse. For the males in this study this definition of spousal similarity is significantly correlated with the Problem Solving Communication scale of the MSI (r
=.79, p < .01). A subject who perceived himself and his spouse as similar reported satisfaction with his and his wife's ability to resolve disagreements. Dissimilarity indicated dissatisfaction in this area.

Spousal similarity was also measured by the standardized distance score between the elements Self and Spouse with Others. No significant correlations were found between this standardized distance score and any of the MSI scales. However, on the basis of the significant correlation with the Problem Solving Communication scale the hypothesis is accepted. The male's perceived similarity to his spouse is related to marital satisfaction.

Females

Interestingly, for females there too was only one standardized distance score with a significant correlation to any MSI scale. However, it is a different standardized distance score and different MSI scale than for males. The Self with Spouse—Spouse with You standardized distance score had no significant correlations with the MSI scales. All resulting probability coefficients were greater than .05 level of significance.

The significant correlation was between the Self—Spouse with Others standardized distance score and the Sexual Dissatisfaction scale of the MSI (r = .70, p < .05). A female who perceived a high degree of similarity between herself and the way her husband behaves with others reported
satisfaction with the amount and quality of sexual activity. Nonsimilarity is related to sexual dissatisfaction. The hypothesis is accepted. Spousal similarity for females is related to marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Husband's Similarity to his Father

The husband's perceived similarity to his father was measured in two ways in the present study. The Self-Father standardized distance score measures the degree of similarity perceived by the male between himself and his Father. The Self with Spouse-Father standardized distance score is a measure of the male's perceived similarity between himself as he interacts with his wife and his father. Both of these standardized distance scores were significantly correlated with the same MSI scale, Conventionalization ($r = -0.65$, $p < .05$ and $r = -0.69$, $p < .05$ respectively).

Males who perceived similarity between themselves and their fathers tended to evaluate their marriages in a naive, uncritical fashion while males who perceived less similarity tended to give a more negative evaluation of their marriages.

It is therefore concluded that the husband's perceived similarity to his father does play a role in marital satisfaction. The hypothesis is accepted.
Hypothesis 5: Husband's Similarity to Father-in-Law

The wife's perception of similarity between her husband and her father was measured using the standardized distance score between the elements Spouse with You and Father from the female's RRG. No significant correlations were found between this standardized distance score and the six MSI scales ($p > .05$). Therefore the hypothesis was not accepted. The husband's similarity to his father-in-law as perceived by the wife is not related to marital satisfaction as it was measured in the present study.

Hypothesis 6: Fixed Format versus Free Response

The significant correlations associated with each MSI scale used in the present study is contained in Table 3. Those most frequently significantly correlated with the standardized distance scores are Conventionalization, Affective Communication, Problem Solving Communication and Sexual Dissatisfaction. The Time Together scale had no significant correlations with the standardized distance scores used in the study.

Of the 78 correlations calculated in the present study (13 standardized distance scores X 6 MSI scale scores) nine were found to be significant ($p < .05$ or better). This is approximately double the number of significant correlations expected by chance at the .05 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the results are well beyond what is expected by chance.
Table 3
Number of Significant Correlations
on Each MSI Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSI Scale</th>
<th>No. of r's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTO</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the five hypotheses tested were accepted. These were the relevance of a positive evaluation of one's spouse, perceived spousal similarity and the male's perceived similarity to his father to marital satisfaction. It is therefore concluded that the fixed format and free response methods provide similar information about marital satisfaction in the areas examined in the present research.
Discussion

One of the major difficulties with the interpretation of the results of the present study is the limited subject sample in terms of the range of marital satisfaction as indicated by the MSI scores. For the most part subjects' reports indicate they have average to very satisfactory marriages. Few scores were high enough to qualify as indicative of strong dissatisfaction. However, since this study was exploratory in nature it was decided to carry through. This section consists of a discussion of the significant results including their relevance to the fixed response - free response method controversy and ends with some possible explanations for the results and suggestions for further research.

By far the most sensitive standardized distance score used, in terms of its correlations with the MSI scales, was Spouse with You - Ideal Spouse with you. What is of particular interest however, is that while the MSI scale Affective Communication is important for both males and females the other scales differ according to the sex of the subject. For males the other scale is Problem Solving Communication while for females the other scales are Global Distress and Sexual Satisfaction. The factors relevant to a positive evaluation of the spouse for males are affection, understanding and an ability to resolve disagreements. For females the factors are affection, understanding, general satisfaction with the marriage and sexual satisfaction.
A piece of information worth note is the inclusion of sexual satisfaction by females and its exclusion by males. This may be due to woman's new found freedom in this area and the male's uncertainty about the appropriateness of expressing his wishes within the newly developing mores of our culture.

There is further evidence for this in the results on spousal similarity. While no significant correlations were found between the MSI scales and the Self with Spouse — Spouse with You standardized distance score for females one was found between Sexual Dissatisfaction and the Self — Spouse with Others standardized distance score. Women who perceived themselves to be similar to the way their husbands behaved with others were also likely to report sexual satisfaction.

For males the ability to resolve disagreements appears important. This could be interpreted as consistent with the traditional conception of males being more problem solving and goal oriented. However, it may also reflect the male's newly developing need to discuss and compromise on issues with an equal partner in life.

In spite of this it appears that the traditional identification of a male with his father is still present, and relevant to marital satisfaction. Perceived similarity between one's self and father for males is related to a positive evaluation of the marriage. This may say more about the need for a solid sense of self than about identification, however, more research is obviously needed.
in order to understand the effect changing roles are having on marital satisfaction.

In general the results of the study were supportive of the hypotheses. Of course not all MSI scales were significantly correlated with all RRC distance scores. This is as it should be. The MSI scales are psychometrically derived from item pools intended to assess general perceptions of marital satisfaction while the RRC standardized distance scores are measures of interpersonal distances. What is of note is the number of significant correlations between the MSI scales and the RRC distance scores. The MSI scale Time Together which relates to a very specific content area within the marriage, has no significant correlations to standardized distance scores. The standardized distance score indicates the degree of similarity between two roles. This does not allow for specific content information to be included. Therefore those MSI scales which examine specific content areas will not be related to any RRC distance scores. The other scales, which contain varying, but significant interrelational components, have a number of significant correlations to the standardized distance scores. These significant correlations indicate a high degree of correspondence between the two measures, the RRC and MSI. While theorists may argue that a fixed response method distorts a subject's responses in a way free response methods do not, the results of the present study indicate this is not the case since much of the information collected
by fixed response methods has been confirmed in the present study by a free response method.

It may be that both methods distort responses, however it seems highly unlikely that two such dissimilar methods could distort the responses in the same way. Another possibility is that the theories and methods used in the construction of fixed response tests result in an accurate reflection of the cognitive structure people use to understand and organize their worlds. However, even a superficial perusal of the tables contained herein reveal the variability of the response patterns between males and females. It is obvious that at least in some ways males and females have a different understanding of what constitutes a satisfying marriage. Therefore any fixed structure which would allow the accurate reflection of the cognitive structure of one group could not help but to distort the responses of another group. For instance a fixed structure which would not distort the responses of males may distort the responses of females.

A third and much more complex explanation of the large correspondence between fixed and free response results can be found in an application of Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. Accordingly, no matter what the stimulus, be it a free response test, fixed response test, newscast or movie, a person uses his or her personal constructs as a filter or organizing structure to give meaning to the event. Their responses are based on this personal understanding of the event and not the external stimulus. This is a process to
which the free response method is sensitive, as is the fixed response method. However, the fixed response method provides no avenue of access to an understanding of the process, as does the free response method. That people give personal meaning to an event must be central to our understanding of human behavior. But knowing this is not enough. Certainly future research should be aimed at understanding the nature of this organizational process and how, when people interact, their construct systems behave.
Appendix A

A Sample RRC Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLES</th>
<th>AUTHORITY</th>
<th>BEST</th>
<th>SEL</th>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FRIEND</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good-bad</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sad-happy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smart-dumb</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warm-cold</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* rating on 7 point scale for role; i.e. Authority on construct good-bad

o designates the two roles which are perceived as alike

x designates the role which is different from the other two
Appendix B

Instructions for the Administration of the RRG

The examiner has available the RRG Role Form, Construct Form and Grid Form in addition to a pencil and eraser. He begins by saying,

"I would like to get some information from you that will help me to understand the ideas and concepts you use when you think about people.

"I am going to read some descriptions of people to you. I want you to tell me the name of a person you know who best fits the description. If you wish to keep the identity of the people private you may use initials or nicknames. You can use the names of anyone you know with the exception of your parents and your spouse as these people are already on the list. Also, when giving names please use a person only once. If, as we go through the list you would like to rearrange some of the names, that is perfectly alright." The examiner then reads the following role descriptions and records the names on the Role Form on lines 10 through 20.

Role Titles:
10) Someone you can trust
11) Someone you feel threatened by
12) Someone you think of as a happy person
13) Someone who dislikes you
14) Your best friend
15) Someone you think of as a person in authority
16) Someone you pity
17) Someone you dislike
18) Someone who has rejected you
19) Someone you think of as being successful
20) Someone you think of as moral or ethical

The subject is then asked to "Give the names of nine additional people you know who have played an important part in your life; that is, they have had some positive or negative effect on you." This information is recorded by the examiner on lines 21-29 on the Role Form.

For each of the 20 people listed the subject was then asked, "As you think about this person what one characteristic of his/her personality stands out in your mind? Do you see that as a positive or negative characteristic? What is the opposite of that characteristic? Is it positive or negative?"

This information is recorded on the Construct Form and the next step explained: (Shows Role Form) "I am going to drop the last nine names from this list and add nine new ones. (Shows Construct Form) "On this sheet I have written the words or phrases you used to describe people. At the top of the sheet you will see a scale with the numbers 1 through 7. The word which you used to describe the most important characteristic of the person is at the '1' end of the scale. The word you used as its opposite is at the '7' end of the scale. You are to use this scale to rate each person on the list along each of the descriptors on this sheet."
The subject is shown the list of names on the Role Form on lines 1-20. Lines 1-9 contain the roles:

1) You as you are now (Self)
2) You as you would like to be (Ideal Self)
3) You when with your spouse (Self with Spouse)
4) How you would like to be when with your spouse (Ideal Self with Spouse)
5) Your spouse when with you (Spouse with You)
6) How you would like your spouse to be with you (Ideal Spouse with You)
7) Your spouse when with other people (Spouse with Others)
8) Your mother
9) Your father

Those titles contained in brackets were not present on the original Role Form and are included here as abbreviations which will be used in the text when referring to these role titles. Lines 10-20 contain the role descriptions originally presented to the subject and his/her responses.

"When you do the rating remember that each number means something a little different. For example if the 'most important characteristic' is 'good' and the opposite is 'bad' then a rating of 1 would mean very good, a 2 would mean moderately good, a 3 would mean a little good, a 4 would mean neither good nor bad, a 5 would mean a little bad, a 6 would mean moderately bad and a 7 would mean very bad. Write the number you want to give to each person for each descriptor on this sheet (show Grid Form). For the ratings on the first descriptor you put the number in the
first column across from the person's name. For the second
descriptor you put the number in the second column across
from the person's name, and so on. Continue until each
person has been rated on each descriptor. Are there any
questions?" The examiner answers questions and gives
examples as needed. When the subject has completed the
construct ratings the examiner then asks the subject to,
"Rate the importance of each pair of characteristics to the
a satisfying marriage where a 1 means it is very important
and a 7 means it is very unimportant." The ratings are
recorded on the Construct Form. When the subject has
completed the ratings the administration of the RRC is
finished.
References


Hastorf A. H., Richardson, S. A., & Dornbusch, S. M.  


Vita Auctoris

Gregory Robert Meloche, son of Robert and Lillian Meloche, was born May 27, 1956 in Windsor, Ontario. He received his primary education at Amherstburg Public School and his secondary education at General Amherst High School. In 1979 he graduated with an Honours B.A. in Psychology from the University of Windsor and in the fall of that year was accepted into their graduate program in Clinical Psychology.