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Implications of relationship social comparison tendencies among dating and married individuals

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IMPLICATIONS OF RELATIONSHIP SOCIAL COMPARISON TENDENCIES AMONG DATING AND MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

by

Grace Angela White

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

December 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Professor David B. Watson

ABSTRACT

The current study examines the construct of relationship social comparison orientation, which deals with an individual's propensity to compare his or her romantic relationship to that of others' romantic relationships on various dimensions, in both dating and married samples. The study also examines the role of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty as an inducement or precondition to relationship comparison tendencies in both groups. 204 married individuals were recruited through The University of Iowa employee pool and 270 dating individuals were recruited to participate using the Elementary Psychology research pool. Dating and married individuals completed questionnaires related to relationship social comparison orientation, general social comparison orientation, and personality traits. A subset of married individuals' spouses also completed questionnaires to report as informants on their partners' relationship comparison tendencies, general social comparison orientation and personality.

Findings show that married individuals report higher levels of relationship and self certainty and satisfaction than dating individuals. Factor analyses of the Relationship Social Comparison Measure (RSCM; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008) and relationship comparison tendencies items produced an interpretable and replicable three factor structure, in both samples, of: 1) general relational comparisons, 2) relational comparisons with positive affect and 3) relational comparisons with negative affect. Dating individuals reported more frequent engagement in general relational comparisons and relational comparisons with negative affect. General relational comparisons and negative affect relational comparisons factor scales were significantly, negatively associated with satisfaction in both dating and married samples; in contrast, however,

general social comparison orientation was unrelated to satisfaction. Findings, additionally, show significant convergence on self-reported and spouse ratings of personality, in the married sample, for Big 5 traits as well as for relational comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation. Positive affect relational comparisons were found to have a small positive association with satisfaction, suggesting that some comparison processes are not maladaptive and may serve to bolster relationship functioning.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph. D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examinating Committee for the thesis requirement for Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology at the December 2010 graduation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQ_Ho= Aggression Questionnaire Hostility
BFI= Big Five Inventory
DES= Dispositional Envy
Ho= Cook-Medley Hostility
KMS= Kansas Marital Satisfaction
NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons
PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales
PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons
QMI= Quality of Marriage Index
RC= Relational Comparisons
RCT= Relationship Comparison Tendencies
RCT_PA= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Positive Affect (spouses)
RCT_NA= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Negative Affect (spouses)
RCT_Envy= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Envy (spouses)
RSCM= Relationship Social Comparison Measure
RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior
RUS_mut=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality
RUS_def= Relationship Uncertainty Definition
RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future
SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities
SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions
SUS_desire= Self Uncertainty Desire
SUS_eval= Self Uncertainty Evaluation
SUS= Self Uncertainty composite (desire & evaluation)

INTRODUCTION

Individuals' self-views are often shaped by social experience. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), has provided an explanation of the mechanism through which individuals' evaluations of themselves are influenced by others. If people compare themselves to others to better judge how they are performing in self-relevant domains, it could also follow that individuals compare their interpersonal relationships to others' relationships to evaluate how they measure up. Although social comparison has a long and well documented history in the examination of its rationale and effects in self-evaluative judgments (Festinger, 1954; Hakmiller, 1966; Thornton & Arrowood, 1966; Wills, 1981), this is not the case for its motivations and consequences in the relationship domain. Until recently, studies that examine the effects of relational comparisons have been few and far between. Moreover, these studies often do not examine the motivations, frequency, or dimension of relational comparisons but rather the affective consequences that result from upward and/or downward comparisons (Buunk, 2006; Buunk, Oldersma, & de Dreu, 2001; Buunk & Ybema, 2003). Additionally, a synthesized method of examining relational comparisons across studies has been absent.

In recent years, researchers have developed scales that assess attention to comparison information and comparison orientation (see Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999); however, at present there has only been one measure developed that assesses orientation for comparisons within intimate close relationships, including dimensions of relational comparisons, direction and affective state when engaging in comparison processes (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). The literature examining social comparisons in the relationship domain has provided important

information on how comparison processes function in dating and marital relationships; however, there are still a number of questions left unanswered by current research.

Understanding cognitive processes in the relationship field has been related to the developmental trajectory of the relationships, coping mechanisms within relationships, and relationship outcomes (Frye & Karney, 2002). The current study a) examines relationship social comparison tendencies and social comparison orientation in both non-marital and marital populations, b) examines the relations among relationship uncertainty, general social comparison orientation and relationship social comparison tendencies, c) investigates how marital satisfaction relates to relationship comparison tendencies and to general social comparison orientation and d) examines how dispositional characteristics may be related to relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies, and general social comparison orientation.

CHAPTER I
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In order to understand better the significance and implications of social comparison in the relationship domain, it is important to understand the theory's origins and evolution over the past century. As stated earlier, social comparison was presented by Festinger (1954) as the underlying mechanism through which an individual's self-views were influenced by others. Classical social comparison theory posited that individuals sought comparison information because of a desire for self-understanding or a need for establishing the accuracy of one's opinions and one's abilities (Festinger, 1954). Ultimatley, uncertainty played a prominent role in why an individual would engage in social comparison. Some important aspects of the theory also dealt with comparison standard selection, the conditions in which comparisons would be most desirable, and the direction of comparison.

Classical Social Comparison Theory

Festinger (1954) argued that when we do make comparisons, our comparison standard or the reference point by which we measure ourselves will be those individuals whom we feel are similar to us. Individuals choose to compare to similar others because this provides the most relevant and diagnostic information about one's own abilities or opinions. Classical social comparison also makes an important point about when individuals will engage in these comparisons. Festinger (1954) posited that we prefer objective evaluations of our abilities and opinions, especially when we are uncertain. However, if an objective evaluation is not available, individuals will engage in social comparison. Finally, classical social comparison theory emphasized the utility of upward

comparisons and individuals' drive to perform like those who are better off (Festinger, 1954).

Social comparison as a theory subsequently was expanded beyond simple opinions and abilities to include emotional states. Schachter (1959) was one of the first to explore the role of social comparison as the underlying mechanism in the connection between affiliation and experience of fearful emotional states. Specifically, research showed that people affiliated in order to determine whether or not they were experiencing the appropriate affective reaction to particular situations. In addition, individuals may use others' emotional states to help them label affect experienced from unexplained arousal (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Recent research suggests that this is particularly true when people are uncertain and, therefore, seek others who have information about the threat they are facing (Kulik & Mahler, 2000). This research demonstrated the prominent role that social comparison processes play in the determination of emotional or affective states. There are many additional theoretical and methodological advancements of social comparison theory, including additional support for the similarity hypothesis (Gordon, 1966) and the introduction of the "rank-order paradigm" (Wheeler, 1966), the development of downward comparison theory as an extension of social comparison is examined next.

Downward Comparison Theory

Although Tom Wills (1981) is credited with the elaboration and clarification of downward comparison theory, its inception can be traced to earlier research that demonstrated that under conditions of threat, people prefer to compare to those they believe are worse off than they on the threatened dimension (Hakmiller, 1966).

Subsequent research also revealed that individuals tended to avoid information about "better off" others when threatened with failure in a particular area (see Friend & Gilbert, 1973; Wilson & Brenner, 1971). These studies provided a better way of understanding comparison direction processes and, in turn, led to additions in motivations that may operate in social comparison. In particular, the expansion of the underlying motivation of social comparison from seeking self-accuracy to self-enhancement motives was significant (Thornton & Arrowood, 1966).

Downward social comparison theory contends that individuals can enhance their subjective well-being by comparing themselves with others who are believed to be worse off. There is a large amount of empirical support for this idea, especially with populations that are under stress or threat (see Suls & Wheeler, 2000). In a number of instances, evidence of apparent downward comparison was found in numerous real-life situations. Among women with breast cancer, in a study examining coping strategies, when asked how they were coping respondents overwhelmingly reported doing better than most other women (Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983). The findings of this study were particularly surprising, given that the effect was still present regardless of the seriousness of problems experienced in relation to the cancer (Taylor et al., 1983). Similarly, in a study demonstrating passive downward comparison, arthritis patients more often preferred to read about another patient who had worse arthritis than they had (DeVillis et al., 1991). This research provided confirmatory evidence of the self- or ego-enhancement motivations operating in social comparison. In particular, downward comparison appeared to proved not only to be a way to bolster self-esteem but also to be a coping

mechanism that produced improvement in mood (i.e., increased positive affect), and in some instances also facilitated coping behaviors (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007).

The self-enhancement motive for social comparison was substantiated further by the development of the self-evaluation maintenance model (SEM; Tesser, 1988). According to the SEM, individuals have a basic motivation to maintain or enhance self-evaluation either through comparison or reflection, two complementary processes. Comparison processes in SEM are solely intended to maintain positive self views (Tesser, 1988). This motivation intricately links downward social comparison theory and self-evaluation maintenance processes. SEM posits that superior performance by another can threaten one's self evaluation through comparison processes; however, it can also enhance one's self evaluation through basking in the reflected glory of the other's achievement, especially if that person is psychologically "close" (Tesser, 1988). Reflection generally involves treating another's achievement as a source of self-affirmation, as if it were one's own success. This is especially true if the individual is considered to be a part of one's self-concept, such as a family member, a romantic partner or a close friend (Tesser, 1988). The model is designed to account for conditions that push individuals toward either the comparison process or the reflection process. Its central tenet argues that relevance of the performance dimension to the self-concept is the main determinant of comparison or reflection processes (Tesser, 1988).

Wills' theory of downward comparison has been brought into question, as a number of studies revealed that individuals under threat in some instances prefer upward comparisons and avoid downward comparisons (Buunk, 1995, Molleman, Pruyn, & VanKnippenberg, 1986; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). In this same vein, research showed

that individuals with high self-esteem showed greater benefits from downward comparisons, whereas individuals with low self-esteem garnered improvements in mood after upward comparisons (Wheeler, 2000). With these findings researchers introduced another motivation for social comparison that might explain the contradiction: social comparison in the service of self-improvement (Taylor & Lobel, 1989). That is, individuals who are low self-esteem or under threat may prefer to compare to those better off for the purpose of helping to enhance their current status. The upward comparison standard in this instance serves as a role model that possesses some attainable characteristic or status. Other challenges to the theory include the finding that downward comparison does not guarantee elevation of mood. In some instances downward comparison produces increased negative affect, especially when individuals can envision themselves as sharing the same fate (Lockwood, 2002).

In light of the inconsistent findings related to downward comparison theory, a recent series of studies examined the usefulness of the theory as a continued part of the field (Gibbons, Lane, Gerrad, Reis-Bergan, Lautrup, Pexa & Blanton, 2002). Five studies assessed preferred comparison level after performance, as well as change in preferred comparison level over time. Overall, these data provided evidence for a downward shift in comparisons and some evidence of "true" downward comparison in three of the five studies (Gibbons et al., 2002). Researchers found evidence that after poor performance individuals tended to avoid upward comparisons but did not specifically look for targets who were worse off than themselves (i.e. engage in "true" downward comparison). Additionally, in support of the original theory, these studies found no evidence that successful individuals or those in a positive mood had more

interest in downward comparison (Gibbons et al., 2002). Therefore, these studies suggested that the original principles of downward comparison should remain but with a few modifications.

The authors argue that in situations in which future performance and evaluation are likely, preferred comparison levels will be oriented towards upward comparison targets because of self-improvement motives; however, if threatened with negative feedback, a downward shift will occur. When future evaluation is not likely, comparison level preferences are oriented toward "true" downward comparison for those who have performed poorly (Gibbons et al., 2002). The authors note that this research only looked at one type of coping (i.e., smoking cessation) and admit that findings may not apply to people trying to cope with serious medical problems; this may be why these results are inconsistent with previous findings in this domain that show preference for upward comparisons (Taylor & Lobel, 1989).

Social comparison researchers have begun to integrate a social cognition approach to comparison processes. This approach examines automaticity of comparisons or the ability for an individual to control comparison processes. Specifically this approach looks at the cognitive processing of comparison information and how that information is used to judge one's own performance on a particular dimension. The investigation of social comparison as it relates to social cognition is summarized next.

Social Cognition and Social Comparison

The social cognition approach examines mental control of the comparison process. Although social comparison researchers often characterize the comparison process as a "choice" that individuals can engage in or not, some work in social cognition

suggests that this is not always the case (Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995). In fact, it is argued that in many instances comparisons arrive unbidden and unwanted and individuals must make subsequent corrections for these unwelcome influences (Petty & Wegner, 1993). The proposed correction models suggest individuals can be influenced in a variety of ways that are uncontrollable and that people may exert control over their thoughts and emotions by correcting for these undesirable effects after they have occurred, rather than avoiding them from the start (Wilson & Brekke, 1994).

Research supporting this view has shown that people do compare themselves with others even when they realize that the comparison other is an inappropriate standard and that the comparison information is unsuitable; however, individuals will also correct for this comparison if they can (Gilbert et al., 1995). Cognitive load paradigms have been implemented to demonstrate that what appears to be a failure to make a non-diagnostic comparison may actually be an instance of successfully correcting one. For example, Gilbert and colleagues (1995) were able to show that when presented with false performance feedback about themselves and a confederate performing the same task, the self-perceived competence ratings of participants who were cognitively busy (i.e., rehearsing an 8 digit number) were consistently affected by the confederate's performance on the task (Gilbert et. al, 1995). This was the case even though they had learned that the confederate's performance was non-diagnostic before they became busy and before they performed the task themselves (Gilbert et. al, 1995). Therefore, cognitively busy participants appeared to be influenced by comparisons to another's performance who they knew had been assisted when she performed better and

handicapped when her performance scores were worse, thus making such comparisons non-diagnostic.

A second experiment using a similar paradigm, without the cognitive load manipulation, showed that even when self-perceived competence ratings appeared to be unaffected by a non-diagnostic comparison, the affective state was (Gilbert et. al, 1995). Using a difference score between reported affective state taken after participants had received feedback about their individual performances and reported affective state taken after receiving performance feedback about the confederate, participants experienced significantly greater positive affect changes when the confederate did poorly than when she did well (Gilbert et. al, 1995). This was true when the participant and confederate performed the same task and when they performed different tasks (Gilbert et. al, 1995). These data indicate that even when participants were aware that a comparison was inappropriate, thus leaving the competence rating uninfluenced, affective changes nevertheless did occur. This supports the correction model that comparisons may be spontaneous and automatic even when they are inappropriate.

In summary, research on social comparison processes using a social cognition approach has yielded a model that provides a framework for understanding mental control of the comparison process. This approach in particular suggests that, although the comparison process may be deliberate in some instances, it is not completely under conscious control. Research suggests that at times comparisons will occur even when one does not want them to happen and these comparisons can influence one's thoughts and affective state (Gilbert et. al, 1995). Although the comparison process may not be under one's total control, it is not suggested that there is no control. Individuals may

successfully correct unsuitable conclusions drawn from these comparisons or may carefully choose the environment in which they spontaneously make comparisons.

Modern Social Comparison

Since its inception, social comparison has been transformed from a theory about abilities and opinions to one that encompasses emotions, affect, and cognitions. It has evolved from a theory motivated by self-accuracy and evaluation to one that also includes self-enhancement and self-improvement. Contemporary social comparison theory examines the need for—and benefits of—both upward and downward comparison. Recent developments in this area also include a more systematic examination of how personality is related to social comparison processes (Olson & Evans, 1999; Wheeler, 2000) and, even more significantly, a recognition that people differ in their tendency to engage in—or inclination to use—social comparison in their everyday lives (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999).

Research on personality and social comparison has revealed that personality is related to frequency of comparison, direction of comparisons, and affective reactions to comparisons. Specifically, in relation to the big five traits, as measured by the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992), individuals high in extraversion and low on agreeableness compare downward more often, whereas individuals high on openness make more upward comparisons and report less negative affect in reaction to these comparisons (Olson & Evans, 1999). Although direction of comparison has not been specifically associated with neuroticism, previous research has shown that individuals who are high on this dimension experienced greater increases in

positive affect after downward comparisons than individuals low in neuroticism (Olson & Evans, 1999).

Personality is also related to individual differences in making comparisons. The inclination to make or not make comparisons with others has been christened "social comparison orientation" (SCO) by some researchers and is characterized as a personality trait itself (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). SCO has been shown to be related to high levels of public and private self-consciousness, as well as a strong interpersonal orientation or interest in mutual self-disclosure; it also is weakly related to low self-esteem and neuroticism (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). Individuals high in SCO are strongly influenced by the moods and criticisms of others; they not only actively engage in social comparisons more often but are also more negatively affected by social comparison (Buunk et al., 2001).

In sum, social comparison has developed into a theory that reaches across many domains and is applicable in almost all areas of human experience. The question being pursued in this document is: How does social comparison provide useful insights in the domain of interpersonal relationships? The following section attempts to make important links to understanding relationships through social comparison theory.

Making the Connection: Social Comparison and Relationship Uncertainty

Social comparison has overwhelmingly been viewed as a process through which individuals gain important information about the self (e.g., Festinger, 1954; Schacter, 1959). Research has shown, however, that for most individuals entering a close, romantic relationship, there is an inclusion of the partner in the self (Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe,

2001). More specifically, the cognitive processing of each partner operates as if the other's resources, perspectives, and identities—along with one's own—are accessed (Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001). From this approach we can make a connection between the cognitive processes one engages in about him- or herself as an individual and the cognitive processes engaged in when the individual is part of a romantic dyad. Some researchers even argue that the self is fundamentally interpersonal: It is constructed and maintained as a way of connecting with others (Tice & Baumeister, 2001). These researchers also posit that the need to belong is a more powerful motivation than any other private self motive (Tice & Baumeister, 2001). Following this type of rationale, all of the motivations that operate in social comparison processes for the individual self also should operate in social comparison processes in relationships.

Social comparison theory claims that we compare to others out of desires for self evaluation, self- or ego-enhancement and self-improvement (e.g., Buunk, 2007; Suls & Wheeler, 2000). In a relationship context, these motivations translate into relationship evaluation, relationship enhancement and relationship improvement when engaging in relational comparisons. In addition, if social comparison can improve feelings about one's own abilities, relational comparisons can, in a parallel manner, improve feelings about one's romantic relationships. Social comparison also is a means by which individuals can improve low self-esteem and cope with threat (e.g., Suls & Wheeler, 2000; Taylor et al., 1983). Similarly, relational comparisons can provide the same function under conditions of relationship threat (e.g., marital problems) or low levels of relationship satisfaction.

One explanatory mechanism for these types of maintenance processes within relationships is relationship uncertainty (Dainton, 2003). The development of intimacy is a difficult process. A sizable body of research suggests that the transition from casual dating to an emotionally attached, interdependent and mutually recognized relationship is fraught with challenges (e.g., Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). Even once the relationship has transitioned to marriage, the partners may continue to have questions or concerns about the relationship's permanency and continuation. Relationship uncertainty can persist beyond the initial stages of relationship development. Consistent evidence supports the contention that its levels remain in flux throughout the lifespan of a relationship, although the nature of the uncertainty changes as new couples transition into established or marital relationships (Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1988; Solomon & Knobloch, 2001).

Four distinct forms of relationship uncertainty have been researched and discussed in the relationship literature (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). *Behavioral norms uncertainty* refers to uncertainty over what is considered to be acceptable and unacceptable behavior within a relationship (e.g. "Is it all right for my girlfriend to go out with friends until 2 a.m.?"). *Mutuality uncertainty* refers to uncertainty of the reciprocity of feelings between partners (e.g. "Does my husband love me as much as I love him?"). *Definitional uncertainty* refers to uncertainty about the current status of the relationship (e.g. "Is our relationship an exclusive relationship?"). And lastly, *future uncertainty* refers to uncertainty over the long-range outcomes of the relationship (e.g. "Will my marriage last 30 years?"; "Will I still be dating the same person next month?"). These

forms of uncertainty are moderately to strongly positively associated, with *r*'s ranging from .56 to .82 (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999).

Uncertainty reduction theory (URT: Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posits that individuals strive to make sense of interpersonal situations by reducing uncertainty about the self, the partner, and the relationship between them (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Relationship uncertainty encompasses doubt about the status of the dyadic unit and exists at a higher level of abstraction than self uncertainty or partner uncertainty (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). Uncertainty about the relationship may have detrimental effects on satisfaction and stability, making the process of uncertainty reduction vital to the relationship (Berger, 1987; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002).

Social comparison theory, as proposed by Festinger (1954), explicitly states that uncertainty may be a precondition to social comparison processes. In the marital and relationship literature reviewed in the following section, only a few studies on social comparison in relationships (e.g. Buunk, VanYpren, Taylor, & Collins, 1991; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008) investigate levels of uncertainty or insecurity prior to examining social comparison processes or investigate its effects on social comparison in the context of their specified outcomes. However, if social comparison tendencies truly do have qualities and attributes similar to that of other personality traits, the question of whether or not uncertainty alone is still important can be raised. The answer to this question should have an important role in further elucidating our understanding, especially due to the fact that uncertainty has been a long-standing precondition to social comparison processes as outlined in the original theory. Explicitly measuring the relations among relationship uncertainty, social comparison tendencies, and relationship

or marital satisfaction is important from both a theoretical and applied approach to clarify our comprehension of the process within romantic relationships.

Empirical Research on Social Comparison and Romantic Relationships

Research examining social comparison in the context of romantic relationships can be categorized by the motivations posited as operating in social comparison. Social comparison has been investigated in the relationship domain as it relates to relationship evaluation, relationship enhancement, relationship improvement and relationship coping. Therefore, research has examined whether or not individuals believe or evaluate their relationships as being better or worse than other people's relationships; whether or not individuals feel better about their relationships after making comparisons (i.e. enhancement); and whether or not individuals use comparisons as a way of coping or understanding improvements in their relationships. As will become fairly obvious, these categorizations of social comparison research in the relationship field can only be loosely applied, due to the fact that these motivations can overlap; thus, depending on the questions addressed in the research, a particular study could fit in multiple domains.

As far back as the early 1990s, researchers have been interested in the role of social comparison in relationship evaluation. In particular, using ideas derived from Schachter's (1959) theory regarding the determination of emotional states and affiliation, researchers have examined the link between marital stress and uncertainty and the desire for affiliation (Buunk et al., 1991). In a sample of 632 married individuals, researchers looked at the desire to affiliate in relation to (a) the degree of marital dissatisfaction and (b) uncertainty about how things are going in one's marriage. Affiliation was

operationalized as the desire to talk to others about one's marriage. As stated earlier, Schachter (1959) and others argued that social comparison is the mechanism through which one is able to determine if one's affective reactions are appropriate; it also assists in labeling emotion caused by unexplained arousal. Therefore, these authors hypothesized that individuals with higher degrees of marital distress would have a stronger desire to affiliate with others than those individuals who were more satisfied with their marriage. Additionally, they hypothesized that individuals who were more uncertain about how things were going in their marriage would have an increased tendency to affiliate (Buunk et al., 1991).

Consistent with the researchers' hypotheses, the higher the degree of marital dissatisfaction and the greater the uncertainty, the stronger was the desire to affiliate. Researchers were also able to show that individuals high in marital dissatisfaction preferred upward affiliation and, therefore, desired contact with individuals in better marriages (Buunk et al., 1991). Thus, this study was able to demonstrate two of the posited motives of social comparison: relationship evaluation and relationship improvement.

A number of studies have linked social comparison with relationship processes through individuals' desire to evaluate or hold "accurate" views of their relationships. Buunk and VanYpren (1991) use relationship comparisons to examine the applicability of exchange theory to close relationships. Exchange theory, also known as social exchange theory, posits that all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. For example, when a person perceives the costs of a relationship as outweighing the perceived benefits, then the

theory predicts that the person will choose to leave the relationship (Clark & Mills, 1979). Participants made comparisons of *equity* in their marriage to that of same-sex others. Comparisons were measured based on how much spouses reported putting into and getting out of their marriage on the Hatfield Global Measure (Hatfield et. al, 1985). An equitable relationship would be one in which spouses felt they were putting into and getting out of the marriage the same as their partners. The researchers found that most individuals felt the input/output ratio in their marital relationship was better than that of most others (Buunk & VanYpren, 1991).

Buunk and van der Eijnden (1997) investigated perceptions of intimate relationships. Again, when participants were asked to compare their relationship to that of "most others", they rated their relationships as being better than average. This effect was even more pronounced among happy couples when they were asked to compare to the "typical average adult" relationship (Buunk & van der Eijnden, 1997). These studies again demonstrate the function that relational comparisons provide in relationship evaluation.

Broemer and Diehl (2003) provide a recent illustration of this motive that incorporates both concepts of social cognition along with social comparison. These authors use *interdependence* theory to interpret how individuals evaluate their relationships. According to interdependence theory, people assess their relationships in relation to a subjective standard that is formed by one's own past experience and by what others have experienced. Therefore, relationship assessments are vulnerable to social comparison information (Broemer & Diehl, 2003). Participants were asked to compare either their current relationship or a possible alternative relationship to an idealized

standard. The authors hypothesized that manipulation of comparison focus would moderate the effect of comparison on relationship satisfaction. Participants were asked either to compare their relationship/alternative to the idealized standard or to compare their idealized standard to their relationship/alternative. The authors posited that this difference in the structure of the comparison question focused participants' attention either on their current relationship—when presented in the former structure—or on the idealized standard (when presented in the latter structure). Consistent with their hypothesis, participants were more satisfied when they rated their relationships as more similar to the high standard and contrasted them away from a low standard (Broemer & Diehl, 2003). Additionally, participants were happier with their current relationships when they contrasted their possible alternative relationships away from a high standard and rated the alternative relationship to be more similar to the low standard (Broemer & Diehl, 2003).

A significant amount of the research examining social comparison and romantic relationships has focused on the issue of relationship enhancement, including affective reactions to relational comparisons. Buunk et al. (2001) examined whether downward social comparison enhanced relationship satisfaction. Specifically, the researchers investigated the impact of describing one's self and one's relationship, in comparison to others doing worse, on relationship and marital satisfaction. Consistent with their predictions, they found that downward comparison produced higher ratings of relationship satisfaction among comparison participants than among those who did not engage in comparison processes. Additionally, the researchers found that downward comparison moderated the effect of relational discontent on satisfaction ratings. They

interpreted this finding as suggesting that satisfaction is increased when comparing one's relationship to that of others who are worse off.

Buunk and Ybema (2003) examined the affective consequences of comparison processes. In particular, they examined the effects of upward and downward comparison on mood and marital satisfaction. Using a sample of more than 100 women, the researchers found that upward comparisons evoked more positive mood, but also a more negative evaluation of marital satisfaction. In contrast, downward comparisons evoked a more negative mood, but a more positive evaluation of one's relationship. A more recent examination of the relationship enhancement issue included an assessment of social comparison orientation (SCO) (Buunk, 2006). This study examined whether married participants' reaction to an upward comparison standard, which involved a happy marriage characterized by either high or low effort, was moderated by relationship satisfaction and SCO (Buunk, 2006). Findings showed individuals high in SCO experienced more positive affect and more identification with the high-effort couple, as did individuals with higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Buunk, 2006).

Researchers also have explored comparison processes as a means of coping with relationship problems or as a means of relationship improvement. Frye and Karney (2002) examined marital satisfaction, marital problems, social and temporal comparisons in a sample of 61 wives and 56 husbands over the course of 2 years. This study extended work that suggests partners engage in more favorable social comparisons and more flattering temporal comparisons as part of relationship maintenance. Specifically, the investigators were interested in the association between the severity of partners' specific relationship problems and their tendency to engage in downward social comparisons.

Marital satisfaction was assessed using the Semantic Differential (SMD) (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Social comparisons and marital problems were assessed using the list of marital problems presented in the Marital Problems Inventory (MPI; Geiss & O'Leary, 1981). To look at social comparison, participants were asked to indicate how they fared in relation to other married couples on each of the assessed problems; specifically, they were asked to specify the percentage of other couples (presented in 10% increments) who were experiencing greater difficulties on each item (Frye & Karney, 2002).

Findings showed that more satisfied spouses tended to perceive themselves as better off, with regard to specific marital problems, in comparison to others (Frye & Karney, 2002). Therefore, as the authors operationalized social comparison, these happy couples tended to engage in more downward comparisons. In contrast, problem severity was negatively associated with social comparison, in that couples with more severe problems did not perceive that they were better off than others (Frye & Karney, 2002). The authors note that their findings represent a replication of the "better than average" effect or "perceived superiority" effect. Additionally, the results of this study may be more supportive of the role of comparisons in relationship maintenance versus coping, due to the fact that those individuals who were threatened with more severe problems did not tend to engage in favorable comparisons, whereas those that were more satisfied and had less severe problems did engage in more favorable comparisons (Frye & Karney, 2002). The authors go on to posit that as a coping strategy, comparisons may be most effective for threats at a general level and not when focusing on very specific marital problems (Frye & Karney, 2002).

The examination of social comparison processes as they relate to romantic relationships has, in essence, focused on four areas: evaluation, enhancement (including affective reactions), improvement and coping. However, social comparison in the relationship domain has not completely caught up with the advancements in the theory. In the domain of individual processes researchers have addressed questions of frequency of comparison, direction of comparison, and affective responses to comparison as they relate to personality. A comprehensive examination of the aforementioned issues is largely missing from the relationship domain.

In an attempt to address some of the aforementioned issues, Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008) developed the Relationship Social Comparison Measure (RSCM), which examines how individuals compare their relationships to others' relationships on various dimensions, including communication, trust, time spent together, and satisfaction. Additionally, this measure looks at the direction of relationship comparisons, therefore examining whether or not individuals tend to compare to relationships that are better or worse off than their own and the mood individuals are in when engaging in relational comparisons (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). In three studies, researchers also examined the association between relationship social comparison (RSC) tendencies, insecurity, and perceived relationship quality in samples of dating individuals that ranged from 73-412 participants; only 4 participants across the three studies reported being married (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008).

Using the RSCM, researchers were able to show that relationship social comparison (RSC) tendencies were significantly associated with relationship insecurity, anxious and avoidant attachment and low self-esteem (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham,

2008). A second study showed that RSC tendencies were negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction and positively associated with perceived relationship alternatives (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Interestingly, although general social comparison orientation, as measured by the social comparison orientation scale (SCO; Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), was significantly associated with RSC, it was not a significant predictor of perceived relationship quality. However, RSC was a significant predictor of relationship quality (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008).

Lastly, researchers were able to demonstrate that RSC is associated with decreases in satisfaction over time. However, this effect was completely mediated by insecurity (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). According to the authors, this suggests RSC tendencies may lead to increases in insecurity, which in turn leads to decreases in relationship satisfaction (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). This research is a significant milestone in attempting to clarify the role of relational comparisons in relationship functioning and outcomes. However, there are still unanswered questions that previous research has not addressed in this domain.

One important question is whether or not relationship social comparisons are a coping or maintenance strategy that can enhance relationship evaluation, as suggested by Frye and Karney (2002); or whether it is a maladaptive strategy that is associated with decrements in relationship satisfaction, which Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008) concluded. Research at the beginning of this decade seemed to suggest that those who were happier in their relationship also saw themselves as better off when engaging in relationship social comparisons (Frye & Karney, 2002). Furthermore, believing that one's relationship would get better and was currently better than it had been in the past

(i.e., temporal social comparisons) was also associated with happier relationships. Only those with severe marital problems did not see their relationships as better off than others (Frye & Karney, 2002). Based on these findings some researchers concluded that social comparison had proved itself as a maintenance process for those individuals in happy marriages. The research on RSCM appears to contradict these findings. As stated previously, research on the RSCM suggests that frequent relationship social comparisons lead to deterioration in relationship satisfaction (Smith Le Beau & Buckingham, 2008). Additionally, relationship social comparisons are associated with anxious attachment styles and low self-esteem (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Thus, a puzzle is presented wherein it appears that individuals who are happy in their relationships make social comparisons and believe they are better off and therefore remain happy, but individuals who compare frequently possibly become less satisfied with their relationships. These results highlight the potential importance of examining the frequency with which individuals engage in comparisons.

The pattern of results presented on the RSCM implies that frequent relationship social comparisons, broadly, lead to decrements in satisfaction (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). However, this is not entirely consistent with the fact that previous research has found that downward relationship social comparisons generally make individuals feel better about their relationships (Buunk & Ybema, 2001; Frye & Karney, 2002). Therefore, it would seem that if one frequently made downward comparisons, as the happiest couples appeared to do in the work done by Frye and Karney (2002), relationship satisfaction would be enhanced rather than decreased. Whereas if one frequently made upward relationship comparisons, it would follow that one would be less

satisfied. There are separate items on the RSCM that attempt to assess whether or not individuals tend to make upward comparisons and whether or not they tend to make downward comparisons (i.e. I compare my relationship with other couples whose relationships are worse [better] than mine) (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Rationally, it would seem that RSC tendencies should be associated with relationship dissatisfaction only in the case in which individuals are primarily making upward comparisons (or perhaps both upward and downward comparisons equally). The original work in which the RSCM was introduced does not elucidate this matter. Therefore, a goal of this study will be to explicate this issue.

A significant matter then becomes what type of role marital satisfaction has in affecting social comparison tendencies. More specifically, whether or not marital satisfaction is predictive of these processes has not been the focus of a significant amount of research. It is also important to recognize that our understanding is limited by the fact that not only can level of satisfaction lead to engagement in social comparison, as asserted in this document, but, in turn, social comparisons may lead to certain levels of satisfaction. The latter has been shown by previous research (e.g. Buunk et al. 2001; Buunk & VanYpren, 1991, Frye & Karney, 2002) Disentangling which is primary may be impossible; however, examining both mechanisms may lead to better understanding and knowledge about the process.

Another key question that has yet to be clearly addressed is the generalizability of social comparison processes across dating versus married samples. Social comparison processes in dating and married relationships may be very similar, if not the same for both types of relationships. Obviously similar principles may apply, as fundamentally

they are both interpersonal relationships. However, there may be some quality of the marital relationship, such as higher levels of relationship certainty in comparison to dating relationships, which has measurable effects on engagement in relationship social comparisons. This question has not been fully answered by previous research.

Generally, a synthesized method of examining relational comparisons across studies has been absent. In recent years, scales have been developed that assess attention to comparison information and comparison orientation (see Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999); however, there has yet to be a measure developed that comprehensively assesses orientation for relational comparisons, including frequency, direction and affective response to this type of comparison information. Although the RSCM addresses a number of the aspects of social comparison in the relationship domain that have not been examined previously, it still does not address affective reactions to comparison information.

The development of a measure that examines social comparison tendencies of romantic partners seems necessary; however, there has been very little published research on the RSCM as a reliable measure of this construct beyond the original work in which it was introduced. Moreover, there has been very little information provided on how the scale was developed or on the structure of the items, such as whether or not they represent one underlying factor or multiple factors. Nor is anything known about this measure and its relation to personality traits or characteristics that are associated with general social comparison orientation. A better understanding of how this measure and its items are related to each other and other constructs in the social comparison domain

seems necessary if it is to be widely used to assess social comparison tendencies in diverse samples.

The belief that individuals vary in the extent to which they seek and use comparison information led to the development of the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), which became the social comparison orientation scale (SCO: Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). SCO attempts to tap into the differing motivations of social comparison, including self-evaluation and self-enhancement (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Specifically, it examines the frequency and content of self-relevant comparisons; however, it does not assess the affective consequences of this process or comparison direction. In one study on social comparison tendencies in dating individuals, SCO was shown to have no association with relationship satisfaction, but was moderately correlated (r= .57) with relationship social comparison tendencies, which was in turn associated with—and predictive of—relationship satisfaction (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). This appears to contrast starkly with the findings of previous research (e.g. Broemer & Diehl, 2003; Buunk et al., 2001; Buunk & VanYpren, 1991), which generally demonstrates that social comparison tendencies are related to and predicative of marital satisfaction. The SCO measure was not widely used in these earlier studies associated with the latter findings mentioned; however, these findings may make sense given that the intent of SCO is to measure comparison orientation as it relates to self judgments, and that the items of the measure are designed to tap into the self motivations of evaluation and enhancement. And as implied previously, these differences in outcomes may be due to the variations in how social comparison tendencies were previously measured across studies. A closer examination of

satisfaction and general social comparison orientation in both dating and marital samples may be important to reconcile these contradictory findings.

The question of the utility of a measure specific to relationship comparisons can also be raised. Although there are a few measures that tap into comparison orientation, with the exception of the RSCM (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008), there have not been any scales that address relationship specific comparisons. The literature has fairly consistently shown that comparing one's relationship to that of another person's can have affective consequences for the individual and evaluative consequences for the relationship (e.g. Buunk, 2006; Buunk et al., 2001; Buunk & VanYpren, 1991). Although general social comparison orientation has been explicitly related to those affective consequences of comparing within relationships (Buunk, 2006), the exact association between general social comparison orientation and relationship satisfaction has not been fully explored.

In their development article for the social comparison orientation scale (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), the researchers were able to show that the items for the measure had a two factor structure. The first factor was related to opinions and explained 38% of the variance and the second factor was abilities and explained 10% of the variance (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). It seems likely that this opinions factor of SCO would be most closely related to evaluations of one's relationship and comparison tendencies within relationships; however a measure that is specific to comparisons in the relationship domain is needed and may be more useful for this dimension. The general social comparison orientation measure may still have some small to moderate relation with the construct of relationship satisfaction due to the fact that it may tap into some underlying

"opinion" variance that could be related to how individuals form opinions of their intimate relationships.

Research on personality and social comparison has also revealed that personality is related to specific comparison processes (Olson & Evans, 1999). It has been shown that individuals high in neuroticism experience a greater increase in positive affect after downward comparisons than individuals low in neuroticism (Olson & Evans, 1999). However, as a construct, very little is known about trait hostility and its relations to general social comparison orientation or relationship comparison tendencies. Previous research examining hostility in the marital domain has demonstrated that it is a driving factor in marital dissatisfaction and dissolution (Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995; Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engl, & Thurmaier, 2006). Although hostility has been examined to a limited extent in previous research, especially as it is measured in the Cook Medley hostility scale, the proposed study would use multiple measures for the construct, including the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992), in an attempt to elucidate its relation to social comparison processes. The proposed study intends to investigate the associations among relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies, general social comparison orientation and their relation to the personality constructs of hostility and neuroticism and other "Big Five" personality traits. As previously described, there are known associations between personality and general social comparison orientation; however, the relations among these traits and specific relationship social comparison tendencies is unknown.

CHAPTER II
THE PRESENT STUDY

Overview

With a growing decline in marriage and an increase in cohabitating relationships that are twice as likely to end (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004), understanding the strategies employed in evaluating, maintaining, and coping in relationships is very important considering the enormous emotional and financial impact that relationship dissolution can have on all individuals involved. Social comparison has shown itself as an informative process, not only for individual functioning but also for dyadic processes (Broemer & Diehl, 2003; Buunk et al., 2001; Frye & Karney, 2002). Therefore, more clearly understanding whether or not social comparisons are a product of satisfied versus dissatisfied relationships, and whether or not this differs as a function of being in a dating versus marital relationship, can provide insight into whether or not comparison is a mechanism of coping or maintenance that can be useful to other couples, or if it is a maladaptive strategy that should be avoided. Knowing what types of comparisons (i.e. upward or downward) satisfied and dissatisfied individuals engage in also can provide insight into the role that this process plays in relationship outcomes. Additionally, the possibility that certain processes, such as relationship social comparison tendencies and relationship uncertainty, may be associated with characteristics within a given individual, such as personality, will further enhance knowledge about this association.

Although interest in social comparison as it relates to relationships is not new, as stated earlier it has been examined in ways that do not completely address the empirical questions presented here. For instance, Frye and Karney (2002) do examine the tendency to engage in downward comparisons, but they were specifically interested in how this is

related to marital problems. Additionally, it could be argued that the way downward comparison was operationalized in the study did not tap into "true" downward comparison effects, but rather individuals' tendency to view themselves as better off than others. Moreover, marital satisfaction and relationship uncertainty have been examined to the extent that they relate to affiliation preferences (Buunk et. al, 1991) but not extensively in relation to cognitive social comparisons. Even though Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008) investigated relationship social comparison tendencies, the questions outlined here were not comprehensively addressed. As previously mentioned, the current study will clarify the issue of whether social comparison is an adaptive or a maladaptive relationship process. Thus, measuring the associations among relationship uncertainty, relationship/marital satisfaction and relationship social comparison tendencies should provide some insight.

As researchers in a quest to capture and understand human experience as accurately as possible, it is necessary to explicate the limiting and moderating conditions of theories that claim to summarize this experience. Over the long history of social comparison, this has been done to a certain extent in the context of self judgments. The field has come from an implicit belief that everyone compares to an acknowledgment that this inclination may vary among individuals. Along these same lines, social comparison as it applies to interpersonal or relationship judgments should also be expanded. The expansion of the theory as it associated with marital relationships will be beneficial to both the marital literature and the social comparison domain because it will provide insights for its usefulness as a maintenance or coping process for relationships, while also

demonstrating that married individuals may be a special population, such that social comparisons' current tenets may need to be modified in order to apply.

Given the significance of understanding social comparison in the relationship domain from both a theoretical and an applied perspective, the need for a comparative examination of relational comparison tendencies in a dating and married sample in the same study seems apparent. By further clarifying and validating the usefulness of the RSCM (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008), which allows individuals to report on the content of their relational comparisons, whether or not these comparisons tend to be upward or downward, and their general affective state when making comparisons, this study could have a significant impact on how the comparison process is viewed and understood in relationship and social comparison research.

The current study validates the RSCM by examining the RSCM's convergent validity with similar measures such as the SCO, which is a general measure of social comparison, and dispositional envy (DES; Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle, & Kim, 1999). Given the fact that it is believed that frequent engagement in relationship social comparisons is a maladaptive strategy that leads to more negative cognitions, evaluations, or emotions about one's relationship (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008), it follows that the RSCM would be related to the construct of envy, which is the affective response to unfavorable social comparisons. More specifically, envy is invoked by a sense of inferiority that results from an upward comparison on a desired dimension (Smith et al., 1999). However, research has shown that certain individuals are more prone to experience this emotion than others and that it is a tendency similar to other personality traits (Smith et al., 1999). Consequently, those individuals who frequently make social

comparisons may also be more prone to experiencing envy. Correlations between RSCM scores and DES scores therefore would suggest some convergent validity between these constructs.

This study also examines the underlying factor structure of the RSCM. It currently is unknown if the items reflect a general relationship social comparison factor or if they are tapping into several more specific factors within the relationship social comparison domain. Also, given that the original research does not detail information about the methods used to develop the RSCM, it is beneficial to understand the true underlying nature of the measure for both theoretical and application purposes. As previously mentioned, general social comparison orientation, as it is operationalized in the SCO, reflects the two domains of opinions and abilities (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). The initial research on the RSCM left the nature of the underlying constructs a mystery. Therefore, based on the items included in the RSCM, it may have a two factor structure similar to the SCO with those factors most likely reflecting the different purpose and content of the RSCM. For example, the RSCM has several items that address the mood the person is in when making comparisons and the majority of the other items address the content of the comparisons in different domains such as communication, intimacy and friendship. Therefore, it is possible that the factor structure of the RSCM could include both a mood factor and a general comparison or content of comparisons factor. On the other hand, the factor structure may suggest multiple factors that represent the specific content of comparisons. Thus, there may be a communication/problem-solving factor, a friendship/intimacy factor and so on in addition to the mood factor. The current study provides an initial answer to the underlying nature of this measure.

In order to test some of the study's hypotheses, 24 additional items that address content areas of social comparison that are not tapped in the current RSCM items were created. Specifically, the RSCM does not examine affective reaction to comparisons; therefore, items that attempt to tap into this aspect of the domain were added to the item pool (see Appendix). Currently, there are only 2 items in the RSCM that look at comparison direction: one item for upward comparisons and another item for downward comparisons (i.e. "I compare my relationship with other couples whose relationships are better [worse] than mine). Additional items were created to address this aspect of social comparison as well.

These additional items also aided in defining a differentiated factor structure of the questionnaire (and, more fundamentally, of this domain). In particular, with the addition of the new items and the current items, the expectation was that the RSCM could have up to 6 well defined factors. This factor structure could include a *satisfaction* factor, defined by items such as "I compare how happy I am in my relationship to how happy I think others are in their relationship"; a *friendship/equity* factor defined by items such as "I compare how my partner and I treat each other to how other couples treat each other" and "I think about what types of activities my partner and I participate in together compared to what other couples do together"; and a *communication* factor defined by items such as "I pay a lot of attention to how well my partner and I resolve problems compared to how well other couples solve their problems" and "I think about how well my partner and I communicate with each other compared to how well other couples communicate with each other." Additionally, the factor structure could also include a *mood* factor, defined by such items as "When I am feeling bad (good) about my

relationship I compare my relationship to other peoples' relationships"; an *orientation/comparison direction* factor defined by items such as "I enjoy listening to other people talk about their relationships," and "I compare my relationship with other couples whose relationships are worse than mine"; and lastly, an *affective response* factor defined by items such as "Comparing my relationship to other couples' relationships makes me feel good" or "It makes me feel sad when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are worse than mine."

By examining the factor structure of the RSCM in this study, I was able to establish the structure of the measure in a dating sample and married sample. Additionally, a factor analysis of the RSCM measure clarified the potential utility of subscales in analyzing and understanding the measure. Subscales may also be helpful in understanding possible differences between dating and married samples.

Although the RSCM may still be deficient in some areas as discussed earlier, a better understanding of the measure may yield a significantly improved instrument for investigating relational comparisons. This is especially true because it offers a more uniform method of assessing relational comparisons and an easier way of comparing findings across studies if used widely. This methodology also works well with most populations and can be used with both dating and married samples.

This study also examines ratings of personality, social comparison orientation and marital satisfaction obtained from both the participant and his or her spouse. The purpose of examining personality characteristics in relation to the RSCM is primarily exploratory in nature. Previous research has examined the relations between general social comparison orientation as measured in the SCO and the "Big Five" personality factors

(Olson & Evans, 1999). This is not the case, however, for relationship social comparison tendencies as it is measured in the RSCM. An analysis of the bivariate correlations between the RSCM and scores on the various personality subscales of the Big Five Inventory (BFI: John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) should explicate the associations among the constructs. In addition to the standard personality traits of the five-factor model, the trait of hostility will be of primary interest. Research in the marital domain has shown that hostility is predictive of relationship and marital deterioration (Rogge et al., 2006); therefore, it would be of interest to see if it is related to other maladaptive marital strategies, as frequent relationship social comparisons have been characterized in some research (e.g. Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008).

Collecting independent spouse ratings of personality and social comparison orientation is a novel approach that has not been examined previously in this context. It will allow an examination of self and spouse levels of convergence on personality ratings. Additionally, it will provide convergence levels for general social comparison orientation and relationship social comparison tendencies that have yet to be examined in the marital domain or the social comparison literature. Having participants' spouses rate them on social comparison orientation and relationship social comparison tendencies also will lend itself to an evaluation of the construct validity of the social comparison orientation scale and the RSCM. Although partners may not be completely aware of the full extent to which their husbands or wives make social comparisons, it follows that spouses of frequent comparers should be quite knowledgeable about the process. In this regard, spouses also report their partners' tendency to be envious of others. Envy has a strong

social comparison component, and it may be a more externally visible trait, from an informant's perspective, than social comparison orientation alone.

In addition to informing the process of construct validity, spouse ratings also are relevant to understanding the dispositional nature of general social comparison orientation and relationship social comparison tendencies. Similar to research done on the visibility of other traits such as neuroticism and extraversion (Funder & Colvin, 1997; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000a; 2000b), convergence on general social comparison orientation or relationship social comparison tendencies may additionally confirm the trait-like nature of social comparison processes. It also should be noted that based on previous research in this area, we know that married couples tend to show higher levels of convergence than dating couples (Watson et al., 2000a; 2000b).

This study investigates the associations between relationship uncertainty and relationship social comparison tendencies. Uncertainty has played an important role in social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) but it has yet to be systematically investigated in the context of relationship social comparisons, with a few exceptions (e.g. Buunk et al., 1991; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Therefore, this study will prominently focus on the associations between relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparisons and marital (relationship) satisfaction. In particular, this study is able to examine both global relationship uncertainty as it relates to those constructs but also specific types of relationship uncertainty examined in the relationship domain, including behavioral norms, mutuality, definitional and future uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). The current study investigates how global and specific types of relationship uncertainty are expressed in both dating and married participants. Moreover, examining

uncertainty at both the measure and subscale level can provide a more nuanced understanding of possible differences in relationship uncertainty between dating and married participants.

Additionally, this study incorporates multiple types of uncertainty, one type which is specific to the relationship (i.e. relationship uncertainty) and another that addresses uncertainty in a more classic sense as it relates to the individual's specific knowledge of his or her own attitudes towards the relationship (i.e. self uncertainty).This examination should provide some insight on the associations between uncertainty, comparison processes, and satisfaction in the context of intimate relationships.

The primary goals of the study are to a) examine whether or not relationship social comparison tendencies and relationship uncertainty scores differ as a function of type of relationship (i.e. dating vs. marital); b) examine whether relationship uncertainty is associated with—and predictive of—relationship social comparison tendencies; c) investigate the associations among marital (relationship) satisfaction, relationship comparison tendencies, and general social comparison orientation; and d) examine how the personality characteristics of hostility and neuroticism are broadly related to relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies, and general social comparison orientation. The specific hypotheses of this study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Participants in non-marital or dating relationships will have greater relationship uncertainty and higher relationship social comparison scores than participants in marital relationships.

There is no research in the marital field that specifically addresses this hypothesis; however, Festinger (1954) suggested that we use social comparison when we are

uncertain and later research supports use of social comparison under conditions of stress or threat (Suls & Wheeler, 2000). For individuals in dating relationships, insecurity and uncertainty are likely to be at higher levels than for those who are in marital relationships. More specifically, individuals in dating relationships may be more uncertain than married individuals when it comes to behavioral norms, mutuality, definitional, and future dimensions of the relationship. Given the absence of existing data, this study makes no specific predictions about how participants will perform on a subscale level of the relationship uncertainty measure. Individuals in dating relationships may not have the same sense of commitment or investment that is intrinsically part of a marital relationship. Thus, the desire or tendency to seek comparison information in relationships may be stronger for those in non-marital relationships.

Hypothesis 2. Relationship uncertainty should predict relationship comparison tendencies, even after controlling for satisfaction, in both samples, but will not predict general social comparison orientation.

Currently, there are no studies that examine relationship uncertainty as a pre-condition to relationship social comparison tendencies in the RSCM. Although general social comparison orientation has been conceptualized as a stable dispositional trait and therefore may not be as strongly influenced by uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies may be a more transient derivative of this trait that is still affected by mechanisms central to social comparison theory, such as uncertainty. Previous research on uncertainty and affiliation (Buunk et al., 1991) provide some evidence to support this line of reasoning. As discussed earlier, Festinger's (1954) original theory posits that uncertainty is an inducement to social comparison. Specifically, research in the

relationship domain has shown that uncertainty about one's marriage leads to greater desires to affiliate with other individuals in marriages that are better off than one's own (Buunk et al., 2001). Affiliation in this instance is conceptualized as the behavioral embodiment of social comparison. Interestingly, Buunk and colleagues (2001) were able to show that relationship uncertainty and low levels of relationship satisfaction do not always go hand-in-hand. Therefore, it is possible to have high levels of marital dissatisfaction and yet have low levels of relationship uncertainty (Buunk et al., 2001). Consequently, after controlling for relationship satisfaction, relationship uncertainty should still be predictive of relationship social comparison tendencies. It rationally follows then that as a construct, relationship uncertainty should be specific to relationship social comparison tendencies and not generalize to global social comparison orientation.

Hypothesis 3. Marital satisfaction will be negatively correlated with global relationship social comparison tendencies but not general social comparison orientation.

The level of satisfaction one has within a relationship can be expected to influence the use of social comparison as it relates to the relationship. However, this may be independent of one's more global (i.e. trait-level) social comparison orientation as it relates to self-evaluation and judgments. As demonstrated by Smith LeBeau and Buckingham (2008), perceived relationship quality was significantly negatively correlated with relationship social comparison tendencies; however, it was not associated with general social comparison orientation. Therefore, it follows that marital satisfaction would be more strongly related to relationship comparison tendencies than to general social comparison orientation. If confirmed, this hypothesis would replicate previous findings with the RSCM.

In this study I also examine the RSCM at the factor level. Given that there is no previous research on the structure of the RSCM it is unclear exactly what factors might be found, how many there are, or how they might relate to marital satisfaction. Therefore, there is a possibility that the factors of the RSCM might show differential associations with marital satisfaction. As discussed earlier, it may rationally follow that making frequent upward comparisons or making both upward and downward comparisons equally is what is driving the negative relation between satisfaction and comparison tendencies. If this aspect is separated out into distinct factors, the pattern of results may be different.

Hypothesis 4a. High levels of neuroticism/negative affectivity will be positively associated with relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation.

Highly neurotic individuals frequently experience subjective distress and negative mood states (Watson & Clark, 1988); therefore, it seems likely that they would also tend to be more uncertain about their relationships and, in turn, engage in more relationship specific and general social comparisons. Although previous research has shown that neurotics benefit more from downward comparison than those lower on this dimension (Olson & Evans, 1999; Wheeler, 2000), whether or not neuroticism is specifically linked to social comparison orientation has not been clearly shown. In the relationship field, neuroticism has been significant in predicting negative marital interactions, lower levels of marital satisfaction and marital dissolution, so it is an important dimension to examine in this context (Donnellan, Conger & Bryant, 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Matthews, Wickrama, & Conger, 1996).

Hypothesis 4b. High levels of hostility will be positively associated with relationship uncertainty, but negatively associated with relationship social comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation.

Hostility as it is measured in the Cook Medley (Cook & Medley, 1954) scale is differentiated from other angry affect measures by its underlying factor of cynical cognition (Martin, Watson, & Wan, 2000). This aspect of hostility has been shown to correlate with neuroticism at $r = .37$ (Martin et. al, 2000); statistically, this means that approximately 14% of the variance is shared between the two variables, which leaves 86% unaccounted for. Due to the fundamentally cynical nature of individuals who score high on this measure, it appears logical that they may be more uncertain in their romantic relationships due to their natural distrust of people in general. However, in turn they may be less likely to engage in relational and general social comparisons due to this same fact. Therefore, from the hostile individual's perspective, if other people are not to be relied on then comparison information may be less important to him or her.

This effect, however, may not carry over to hostility as it is measured in the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) considering its different psychometric properties than the Cook Ho scale. Specifically, the Ho scale has shown strong predictive validity with health outcomes, like cardiovascular disease, which the AQ does not (Barefoot et al., 1984). Therefore, the Ho scale may be tapping into some underlying aspect of hostility that is not measured by the AQ. Consequently, it may be that the hostility assessed by the Ho relates differently to relationship variables than does the hostility tapped in the AQ.

CHAPTER III
METHOD

Participants

A total of 270 dating participants were recruited through the research participant pool from the Elementary Psychology course at The University of Iowa. Participants were enrolled in the study if they had been in a dating relationship for at least 3 months. The average age of participants was 18.77 years (*SD*= 1.07). Ninety perscent of the dating sample reported their race as Caucasian/White. (The proportion of non-Caucasian individuals in the state in which the research was conducted is 7%; US Census Bureau, 2000.) Approximately 72% of the sample classified themselves as 1st year students. Sixty-three percent of the sample was female. Participants reported knowing their partner an average of 12.98 months before dating. On average, participants had been dating approximately 15.60 months. Six percent of the participants were currently living with their partner for an average of 7.62 months. Three percemt had lived with their partner in the past for an average of 2.88 months. The average age when the relationship began was 17.41 years. Approximately 5.5% of the dating sample reported being engaged.

In all, 204 married individuals were recruited using an email solicitation sent to University of Iowa employees. Married individuals between the ages of 18-60, who were proficient English speakers, were enrolled as participants. The average age of married participants was 38.93 years (*SD*= 9.51). Approximately 87% of the sample was Caucasian/White, 6% Asian, 3% African-American, 2% Hispanic/Latino, and roughly 2% specified "Other." The sample was split evenly between male and female participants (N= 102 males, 102 females). Participants reported knowing their spouses an average of 13.10 months (*SD*= 28.38) before dating. The average age when the relationship began

was 23.71 years. Participants reported being married for an average of 12.26 years (*SD* = 10.72). Approximately 62% of the sample reported living together prior to marriage for an average of 2.47 years (*SD*= 3.48). Almost 59% of the married sample indicated they had children.

A total of 143 spouses provided informant ratings about their partners. No specific demographic information was collected from these individuals. Approximately 61% of the spouse informants were female. To examine whether or not there were significant differences between spouses who did participate and those who did not, *t*-test analyses where performed on all responses from target participants whose spouses did participate in comparison to target participants whose spouses did not. Of the 204 target participants and possible spouses, 61 spouses did not return questionnaire packets. Significant differences were found on the variables of relationship uncertainty (mutuality and future scales), self uncertainty (desire and evaluation scales) and BFI openness. A comparison of means shows that participants whose spouses *did not* participate were significantly different from participants whose spouses did participate on relationship uncertainty mutuality ($t[202]= -2.47$, $p<.05$), indicating they were more uncertain. Participants whose spouses did not participate also indicated greater future relationship uncertainty ($t[202]=-2.74$, $p<.01$). Effect sizes for these comparisons were small, $d= 0.34$ and $d=0.39$, respectively. Additionally, the participants whose spouses did not participate reported greater uncertainty with regard to their desire for the relationship ($t[202]= -1.61$, $p< .05$) and their evaluation of the worth of the relationship ($t[202]= -1.04$, $p< .05$) than participants whose spouses did participate. Effect sizes for these comparison were also small, $d=0.23$ and $d=0.15$, respectively. Lastly, participants whose spouses did not

participate reported lower levels of openness on the BFI (t[202]= 2.53, p<.01) than participants whose spouses did participate. The effect size for this comparison was small, d=0.36.

This difference in personality may specifically indicate that participants whose spouses did participate were possibly more willing or *open* to involving their spouse in the study generally and possibly more likely to encourage their spouse to complete and return the study measures. The differences between target participants in uncertainty about aspects of the relationship may indicate that participants would be more hesitant to request or want spouses to participate given the nature of the study and the questions being asked.

Procedure

All target participants completed demographic information (e.g. age, sex, race), and questionnaires that assessed relational comparison tendencies using the Relationship Social Comparison Measure (RSCM: Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008) and additional relationship comparison tendencies items, hereafter referred to as RCT items, created by this author. Marital satisfaction was measured using the Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983) and Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grisby, 1983); adapted forms of these measures were used to assess relationship satisfaction in dating participants. Measures of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty (RUS, SUS; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999), personality assessments of hostility (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992; Ho; Cook & Medley, 1954), neuroticism/negative affectivity (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), global personality traits (BFI; John, Donahue,& Kentle, 1991), dispositional envy (DES; Smith,

Parrott, Diener, Hoyle, & Kim, 1999) and social comparison orientation (SCO; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) also were completed. Due to copyright restrictions these measures are not included in Appendix A. Additionally, all copyrighted items included in the tables are paraphrased and sources are cited.

Dating participants received consent documents and a link to the online forms through email. Those who consented to participate completed all measures over the internet through *WebSurveyor*. The online format utilized the same measures only in a web-based form. Dating participants received research exposure course credit for their participation.

Married participants were recruited using a method similar to that employed in Heller and Watson (2005). An email solicitation sent to The University of Iowa faculty and staff invited married adults under the age of 60 in the Iowa City area to participate. Married individuals were invited to the lab to complete demographic and target questionnaires. It was not necessary for both spouses to participate; however, at the end of the questionnaire session, married participants were given a short packet of measures to be completed by their spouses.

A total of 143 spouses returned the questionnaires in the provided campus mail envelope. Spouses were asked to complete the BFI, the SCO and an adapted questionnaire on relationship comparison tendencies, hereafter referred to as RCT Spouse items, to report as informants for their partners' behaviors in relation to the constructs being investigated in the RSCM and RCT scales. As part of this adapted RCT Spouse scale, participants also reported on their partners' tendencies to be envious of others, based on similar questions that were included in the DES measure. The directions for the

BFI and SCO measures remained the same except that partners were asked to indicate the extent to which the items reflected their spouses' behavior or actions on a given measure. Additionally, spouses reported on their own marital satisfaction, as measured in the QMI and KMS. Married individuals were compensated $20 in gift cards for their participation. $10 gift cards were mailed to spouses for their informant ratings and participation.

Measures

General Comparison Orientation. The Social Comparison Orientation is an 11-item scale (SCO; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999) that measures general individual differences in tendencies to make comparisons. Responses are scored using a 5-point (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) scale. Example items include "I pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things" and "I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life." Instructions were adapted for the spouse sample so that participants indicated the extent to which they agreed their partner engaged in these behaviors. Higher scores indicate higher levels of/more frequent comparison behaviors. Cronbach's alpha was .78 in the dating sample and .83 in both the married and spouse samples.

Relationship Social Comparisons. The Relationship Social Comparison Measure (RSCM; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008) assesses individual differences in tendencies to make relationship social comparisons by indicating how often they made each type of comparison. This measure consists of 24 items. Instructions are as follows: "We are interested in if and when people compare their relationships to other couples' relationships. Please think about your current relationship when answering the following

questions." Each item is rated on a 5-interval scale (with response options of never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always). Example items include: "I pay a lot of attention to how well my partner and I resolve problems compared to how well other couples solve their problems" and "I think about what types of activities my partner and I participate in together compared to what other couples do together" (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Higher scores indicate higher levels of/more frequent comparison behaviors. Cronbach's alpha in the dating and married samples was equal to .94 and .93, respectively.

RCT items. As noted earlier, an additional 24 items were written focusing on the areas of affective response to comparisons (14 items), comparison direction (6 items) and frequency of comparison (4 items). These additional relationship comparison tendencies items, referred to as RCT items, were created to tap into the aforementioned dimensions because the original RSCM has either very few or no items that relate to these specific areas. For these items, participants were instructed to rate agreement with each statement from a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. Example items include: "When I see an unhappy couple I tend to feel good about my relationship," "I do not like to think about other peoples' relationships that are better off than mine" and "It makes me feel good when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are worse than mine."

RCT Spouse items. Another 12 item relationship comparison tendencies scale, referred to as RCT Spouse items, was created as a translation of constructs from the RSCM, RCT, and DES so that spouses could provide informant ratings about their partners' tendencies to compare their marriage, their partner's affective responses to comparisons, and their partner's feelings of envy. Spouse informants were instructed to

indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the tendencies or behaviors as characteristic of their spouse on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale, in which 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 =*moderately disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *moderately agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*. Example items include, my spouse tends to: "Frequently compare him or herself to others," and "Compare how happy we are in our relationship to how happy others are in their relationships."

Relationship Uncertainty. This construct was operationalized by the Knobloch and Solomon (1999) measure. This is a 16-item measure that includes four 4-item subscales representing the four areas of relationship uncertainty: behavioral norms, mutuality, definition, and future. Items ask respondents to indicate how certain they are about "what you can or cannot say to each other," "whether or not you and your partner feel the same about each other," "whether or not you and your partner will stay together," and "how you and your partner would describe this relationship (RUS; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Participants respond to each item on a scale from 1 (completely or almost completely uncertain) to 6 (completely or almost completely certain). Both overall and scale scores were computed. High scores on this measure indicate higher levels of relationship certainty, therefore low scores indicate uncertainty. For ease of interpretation in the data analyses, all scales were recoded so that higher scores would reflect greater uncertainty.

Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was equal to .95 and .93 for the dating and married samples, respectively. Alpha reliability coefficients for the behavioral norms subscale were .86 and .79 for dating and married samples, respectively. The coefficients for the mutuality subscale were .91 and .88 for dating and married samples, respectively.

For the definition subscale, alphas were equal to .90 and .83 for dating and married samples, respectively. For the future subscale, coefficients were equal to .87 and .89 for dating and married samples, respectively.

Self Uncertainty. This construct refers specifically to when a person is unable to predict or describe his/her own behavior or attitudes. Knobloch and Solomon (1999) created scales to specifically address this characteristic in the context of a romantic relationship. This 19-item measure attempts to represent 3 areas of an individual's self uncertainty about a relationship in 3 subscales, which include his/her *desire* for the relationship, *evaluation* of its worth, and *goals* for its progression (SUS; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Participants in the dating and married samples responded only to items from the desire and evaluation subscales. Similar to the relationship uncertainty measure, participants respond to each item on a scale from 1 (completely or almost completely uncertain) to 6 (completely or almost completely certain). The desire subscale has 7 items that ask participants to indicate certainty on statements such as "how committed you are to the relationship" and "your feelings about your partner." The evaluation subscale has 4 items, on which participants are asked to indicate certainty in areas such as "how important this relationship is to you" and "how much you are romantically interested in your partner." (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Individual scale scores and a combined score were computed. Higher scores indicate lower levels of uncertainty, or higher levels of certainty. As with the RUS, for simplicity in interpreting findings, in all data analyses, scores were recoded so that higher scores would truly reflect uncertainty. Reliability coefficients in the married sample were equal to .94 for both the desire and evaluation

scales. In the dating sample, alpha coefficients were equal to .94 and .90 for the desire and evaluation subscales, respectively.

Marital (Relationship) Satisfaction. The Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983) is a widely used 6-item measure of satisfaction. All responses are based on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree, and 7 = strongly agree, with the exception of the last item that is rated on an 8 point scale of 1, very unhappy to 8, perfectly happy. Higher scores on this measure indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. This measure has been able to discriminate between distressed and non-distressed marital relationships (Norton, 1983). Reliability for the measure is generally high, split-half = .95, suggesting some redundancy in the items (Dainton, 2003). The coefficient alpha was equal to .95 and .96 for the dating and married samples, respectively. Reliability for spouses' reports on this measure was equal to .97.

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grisby, 1983) is a 3-item measure that marital researchers have frequently used to assess marital satisfaction. Items are responded to on a Likert scale of 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). For example, one of the items is: "How satisfied are you with your marriage?" Higher scores on this measure indicate higher levels of marital or relationship satisfaction. The coefficient alpha was equal to .93 and .94 in the dating and married samples, respectively. Reliability in the spouse ratings was equal to .96. Although this suggests overlap in the items, in other studies the KMS has been shown to be highly related to long term marital satisfaction (Schumm et al., 1983). The adapted form in the dating sample changed the term "marriage" to "relationship" in these items.

Personality Assessments. The Cook-Medley (Ho) Scale (Cook & Medley, 1954) was developed from the MMPI (Hathaway & McKinley, 1942) to assess trait-level hostility. The Ho scale is composed of 50 statements scored via a true/false response format. Examples of items include "I am not likely to speak to people until they speak to me" and "I am often inclined to go out of my way to win a point with someone who has opposed me." The coefficient alpha was equal to .87 and .82 for the dating and married samples, respectively. The Ho scale has been widely used to study hostility in samples of newlywed couples (Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995; Newton et al., 1995; Smith & Frohm, 1985), and is predictive of later cardiovascular disease outcomes and general mortality (e.g., Dembroski & Costa, 1987; Diamond, 1982). High scores on this measure indicate higher levels of trait hostility.

The Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992) was intended to measure overall aggression; its components include anger and hostility, which are the focus of the analyses discussed in this document. Higher scores on the overall measure indicate higher levels of anger and/or hostility. Items are answered using a 5-point Likert format (1= "extremely uncharacteristic of me" and 5= "extremely characteristic of me"). The Hostility subscale of the Aggression Questionnaire consists of 8 items. Item statements include "I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy" and "I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers." The alpha coefficient for this scale was .87 and .78 for the dating and married samples, respectively.

The Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) is a measure of mood and affective trait dimensions. The PANAS is designed to identify both transient (i.e. state) and stable (i.e. trait) experiences of positive and

aversive mood states. Trait positive affectivity and trait negative affectivity scales have been shown to correspond to the dominant personality factors of extraversion and neuroticism, respectively (Watson et al., 1988). This measure consists of two 10 item scales; in the trait version, individuals rate the extent to which they generally have experienced different feelings and emotions (e.g. upset, scared, hostile, active, enthusiastic, interested) on a 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) response scale. For the analyses of the present study only the Negative Affectivity (NA) items were of primary interest. Higher scores indicate higher levels of negative affectivity/neuroticism. Alpha reliabilities for this scale were .82 and .83 for the dating and married samples, respectively. Participants also completed the Positive Affectivity (PA) items. Alpha reliabilities for this scale were .86 and .85 for the dating and married samples, respectively.

The Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 1991) broadly assesses the personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Responses are scored using a 5-point (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) scale. Participants indicate how well these listed characteristics described them. For example, items on the neuroticism scale include "is depressed, blue," "worries a lot," or "can be moody." The BFI has 8- to 10-item scales for each of the Big 5 traits. Spouse participants indicated how well the items described their partners. Reliability for the Neuroticism scale was equal to .83 and .85 in the dating and married samples, respectively. The alpha coefficient in the spouse sample was .88. The coefficient alpha for the Extraversion scale was .84 and .86 in the dating and married samples, respectively, and .87 in the spouse sample. Alpha coefficients were equal to .73, .83, and .79 for the Openness scale in the

dating, married and spouse samples, respectively. For the Agreeableness scale, reliability coefficients were equal to .77 in both the dating and married samples and .81 in the spouse sample. Alpha coefficients were equal to .77, .84, and .85 for the Conscientiousness scale in the dating, married, and spouse samples, respectively.

The Dispositional Envy Scale (DES; Smith et al., 1999) measures the responses of inferiority and ill will, called envy, that tend to be brought on by *unfavorable* social comparisons. This measure consists of 8 items rated on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Items include "the bitter truth is that I generally feel inferior to others" and "it is so frustrating to see some people succeed so easily." Higher scores indicate higher levels of enviousness. Overall coefficient alpha was equal to .89 and .88 in the dating and married samples.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Power Analysis and Preliminary Analyses

Several power analyses were performed to determine the minimum number of participants needed to lower the probability of Type II errors, or acceptance of a null hypothesis (a false negative error). This analysis usually involves the use of a sample size formula relevant to the research questions. In general, the power of any statistical test can be raised by increasing the sample size (Kleinbaum, Kupper, Muller, & Nizam, 1998). The G*Power 3 program (Faul, Erfedler, Lang & Buchner, 2007) was used to conduct the analyses. This is a statistical package used for calculating power and sample size in social, behavioral and biomedical sciences. It covers power analyses for many of the statistical test families (e.g. t, F, χ^2) commonly used in those domains (Faul et al., 2007).

G*Power 3 allows for sample size to be calculated based on an expected effect size (d, r, f), a specified error probability (e.g. α=.05), and a specified power (e.g. β = .80) for different types of statistical tests. The hypotheses in this study were investigated using *t*-tests to examine mean differences between groups, multiple regressions for the predictive relations among constructs, and bivariate correlations as well as factor analysis.

In the social sciences an expected power of β = .80 has been acceptable for most statistical tests; therefore .80 was the set level for all of the analyses. Correlations between constructs in previous research have also been used as the basis for expected effect sizes. Therefore these values were inserted as expected effect sizes for the calculation of the sample size and the error probability was always set to α=.05. Minimum sample size needed ranged from approximately N= 80 per group (160) for

independent sample means comparison, to N= 102 for multiple regression analysis with 2 predictors.

With the use of GPower, power achieved can also be determined. As previously stated, 270 participants completed data in the dating sample, and a total of 204 respondents were included in the married sample, with 143 responses from spouses to examine convergent relations. Overall power achieved was above the expected power of $\beta = .80$, in analyses with all valid cases (e.g. $N = 204$ married, $N = 270$ dating) achieving $\beta = .94$; and in analyses with missing cases ($N = 189$ married, $N = 239$ dating) still achieving $\beta = .88$.

In the married sample, each measure had 2% or less missing data, with the exception of the Cook-Medley Ho scale, where 6% of these data were missing. In the dating sample, each measure had approximately 6% or less missing data, with the exception of the Cook-Medley Ho scale where 12% of these data were missing. In the informant (spouse) sample less than 1% of all data were missing. However, nine of the 143 spouse participants mistakenly received questionnaire packets that did not include the marital satisfaction measures.

For the remaining 134 participants who completed and returned the spouse packets there were no missing data on these measures. For some measures with less than 10% missing data, missing values were estimated. A linear interpolative method was used to estimate missing values on the RUS, SUS, DES, and PANAS in the dating sample. This method is offered in the SPSS statistical package. It uses the completed items on each scale to estimate the missing item values. Specifically, it estimates each missing value based on an algorithm that uses the values of the items before and after the

missing item. Therefore, on measures with large portions of consecutive missing item values, such as the Cook-Medley, this method could not be used due to the fact that there would not be enough information available to estimate the missing cases. Values were estimated at the scale level for measures that contain subscales.

Factor Analysis

RSCM. No specific predictions about the underlying structure of the Relationship Social Comparison Measure (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008) were made; however, a better understanding of the nature of this measure seems necessary. In order to examine the structure defined by the RSCM and the RCT items, they were subjected to exploratory principal factor analyses in the dating and married samples. These analyses were first completed with the original RSCM items alone and then with the additional RCT items in each sample. Any attempt to confirm the factor structure found in the dating sample with a confirmatory analysis in the married sample seemed inappropriate after significant differences between the samples on these measures were found.

Initial eigenvalues and variance explained for the factor solutions are presented in Table B1 for both the dating and married sample. Factor loadings for the unrotated first factor are presented in Table B2 for the dating and married sample. As Table B2 shows, there does appear to be a general factor that is defined by virtually all of items in both the dating and married samples. With one exception, the item loadings range from .57 to .76 in the dating sample and from .48 to .73 in the married sample. In both samples, the last item loads weakly on this general factor with loadings equal to .13 and .30 in the dating and married samples, respectively.

Although there does appear to be an overall broad factor, it is apparent from a few of the loadings in the dating sample and a larger portion of loadings in the married sample that this single underlying factor may not be very general to all of the domains the items are assessing, such that extracting additional factors may be useful. Varimax rotation was used to increase interpretability of multi-factor solutions. Varimax rotation constrains factors to be uncorrelated, which allows items that may have loadings on more than one factor to be more readily identifiable. This is helpful in item amendment or deletion in the creation of scales/subscales.

Initially, two factors were extracted and examined for interpretability and replicability in the dating and married samples. The two-factor solutions are presented in Table B3 for both samples. As reported in Table B3, it is apparent that the two factors extracted in the dating sample are not the same as the two factors extracted in the married sample. In the dating sample, in particular, the majority of the items load moderately to strongly on the first factor only. In the married sample, however, the items appear to split more clearly into two factors; however, the factors are not conceptually interpretable. Thus, the two-factor solutions failed to identify clear, replicable dimensions.

I next explored the three factor solutions. The 3 factor solutions for the dating and married sample are reported in Table B4. Factors in these data appeared to emerge in varying order for the dating and married samples. Although there is overlap in content between some of the factors in the dating and married samples, evidence of clear interpretability and replicability of the factors is not apparent based on these data. Taken together, these analyses of the original RSCM indicate that—with one exception—the

items are defined by a single general factor. Analyses of additional solutions failed to yield clear, replicable dimensions.

RSCM & RCT. Factor analyses including the additional RCT items were necessary to determine whether or not specific content dimensions could be identified, such that subscales could be created and used in subsequent analyses. As previously stated, the initial eigenvalues and variance explained for these solutions are presented in Table B1. Table B5 reports loadings on the first unrotated factors for items of the RSCM and RCT in the dating and married samples.

In the dating sample, loadings range from -.04 to .75. In the married sample, loadings on the unrotated factor range from .05 to .79. The lowest loading items in both the dating and married samples include: "I feel happy when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are better than mine," "I find comparing my relationship to other couples' relationships to be unpleasant," and "When I see a happy couple I feel happy about my relationship." Loadings for these items were .20, .04 and -.04, respectively, in the dating sample, and were .16, .15, and .05, respectively, in the married sample.

As previously stated, the handful of items with weak loadings on the general factor are possibly due to the items being better explained by the extraction of additional factors. The rotated two factor solutions are reported in Table B6 for the dating and married samples. Again the factors extracted from these data appear to emerge in different orders for the dating and married samples. The overall content of the two factors in both samples seems to deal with comparing one's partner on various domains: some negative affect-related comparison items define the first factor, whereas the second

primarily is marked by positive affect-related comparison items. Although these two factors appear to be replicable across both samples, extraction of additional factors may increase the interpretability of the solutions.

Three factor solutions for RSCM and RCT items are reported in Table B7 for both the dating and married samples. Based on these analyses, there does appear to be a replicable and interpretable three factor structure across the two samples. Overall, the content of the factors in both samples seems to be (1) a factor related to comparing one's relationship or partner on various dimensions to others—that is, a general relational comparisons factor based primarily on RSCM items—which is the first factor in the dating and married samples; (2) a factor related to positive affect experienced in comparison processes, which is the second factor in the dating sample and the third factor in the married sample; and lastly (3) a factor of negative affect in comparison processes, which is the second factor in the married sample and the third factor in the dating sample. These factors are hereafter referred to as the relational comparisons factor (RC), the positive affect relational comparisons factor (PARC) and the negative affect relational comparisons factor (NARC), respectively.

To further examine the similarity of the factors produced in each sample, factor scoring coefficients can be calculated and then applied to standardized item responses to generate an estimated score on each factor for each participant. The coefficients from the different solutions then can be applied to the same item responses on the RSCM and RCT, in each sample, to determine the strength of the correlation between these factor scores. In total, 15 correlations are produced from the 2 sets of coefficient equations in each sample. Tables B8 and B9 show the correlations between the factor scores (these are

termed “comparability coefficients”; see Everett (1983), Finn (1986)) generated from responses on items in the dating and married samples, respectively. Comparability coefficients of .90 and higher indicate that the same factor has been identified in different solutions (Everett, 1983).

It is noteworthy that the comparability coefficients for the relational comparisons factor (r = .89 and .91 in the dating and married samples, respectively) and for the positive affect relational comparisons factor (r = .90 and .90, respectively) approached or met the .90 benchmark in both samples, indicating that these factors replicated quite well. In contrast, the coefficients for the negative affect relational comparisons factor were somewhat lower (r = .82 and .88 in the dating and married samples, respectively), but still reflected a reasonable level of replicability. Overall, therefore, the three-factor solution yielded dimensions that were both interpretable and replicable.

With this information, factor scales based on the consistent markers of each factor can be created and used in subsequent analyses. Factor scales are created by using the item markers that are common to each factor in both samples. Items were retained if they (a) had a loading greater than or equal to .40 on the target factor and (b) a loading less than .30 on all other factors and/or if the loading on the target factor was at least .10 greater than its loading on any other factor.

As previously stated, only items that were clear markers of the factor in both samples were kept; therefore, the relational comparisons (RC) factor became a 12 item scale primarily composed of RSCM items. The coefficient alpha for this scale was equal to .90 and .87 in the dating and married samples, respectively. A factor scale was also created from the 10 items that were markers for the positive affect relational comparisons

(PARC) factor in both samples. Coefficient alpha was equal to .74 and .77 in the dating and married sample, respectively. The final factor scale created included 5 items that were markers for the negative affect relational comparisons (NARC) factor in both samples. Coefficient alpha was equal to .80 in the dating sample and .82 in the married sample. The scales as a whole will be referred to as measures of relational comparison tendencies.

RCT Spouses. The RCT spouse items were also subjected to a principal factor analysis, to assist in determining how these items should be defined and assessed in subsequent data analyses. Initial eigenvalues were equal to 5.42, 1.63 and 1.31, which explained 45.15%, 13.16%, and 10.87% of the variance, respectively. Factor loadings for the first unrotated factor are reported in Table B10. There does appear to be a fairly large general factor with most items loading above .60 and the lowest loading equal to .47 for the item "Feel good about our marriage after comparing it to other people's marriages that are happier than ours." Nevertheless, additional factors were extracted to determine whether or not more meaningful information could be garnered. Once again, factors in these multi-factor solutions were rotated using varimax.

Item loadings for the two-factor solution are presented in Table B11. Items on the first factor appear to represent a combination of (a) experiencing negative affect after making comparisons and (b) the experience of envy. Items on the second factor relate to experiencing positive affect after comparisons. This split between (a) a comparisons with positive affect factor and (a) hybrid envy and comparisons with negative affect factor is not clearly interpretable and might create problems when examining additional associations. Therefore, a three factor solution was also examined.

Factor loadings are reported in Table B12. The first factor reflects a clear envy factor, the second rotated factor is defined primarily by comparison with negative affect items, and the third factor is primarily marked by comparison with positive affect items. This three-factor structure of the spouse items parallels what was found with target items in the married and dating samples and may provide more interpretable and meaningful relations in additional analyses.

Accordingly, factor scales were created from the item markers of each factor. The first factor, which was primarily envy, became a 5 item scale, hereafter referred to as RCT_Envy. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was equal to .86. An additional scale, which was primarily defined by comparisons with negative affect, was created from the 3 items that were markers of this factor. This scale is referred to as RCT_NA. Alpha was equal to .86. For the final factor, which was primarily composed of comparisons with positive affect items, a 4 item scale was created from its markers, which will be referred to as RCT_PA. Coefficient alpha was equal to .81.

SCO. Although most frequently an overall social comparison score is used, the authors of the social comparison orientation measure report that this scale appears to reflect two distinct factors, an opinions factor and an abilities factor (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). The items of this measure were therefore subjected to an exploratory principal factor analysis in the dating, married, and spouse samples to determine whether or not the factors originally reported could also be obtained in the current data.

In the dating sample, initial eigenvalues were equal to 3.63 and 1.85, which explained 33.03% and 16.80% of the variance, respectively. In the married sample, initial eigenvalues were equal to 4.04 and 2.10, which explained 36.72% and 19.12% of

the variance, respectively. Lastly, in the spouse sample, initial eigenvalues were equal to 4.26 and 2.17, which explained 38.76% and 19.70% of the variance, respectively.

Table B13 reports factor loadings for SCO items in the two-factor solution in the dating, married and spouse samples, respectively. In all samples, it appeared that the same two factors were extracted. Comparability coefficients for factor scores in each sample are reported separately for the dating sample in Table B14, the married sample in Table B15, and the spouse sample in Table B16.

The factor score correlations were calculated from factor coefficients in the dating solution, the married solution and spouse solution that then were applied to items in each sample. It is of note that for the abilities factor the coefficients ranged from .95 to .98 in the dating sample, and from .97 to .99 in the married and spouse samples. The coefficients for the opinions factor are equal to .98 in the dating sample. Factor score correlations for the opinions factor in the married and spouse samples ranged from .98 to .99.

The same 6 items that were identified as the "abilities" items in the initial article defined one of the factors in each sample (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Additionally, the same items identified as the "opinions" scale in the original article defined a second factor in all samples, except in the dating sample, where one item did not load on this dimension. This item (Item 11), "I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people," did not load on either factor in the dating sample. Because of this, this item was dropped from the factor scale. Coefficient alphas for the "opinions" scale in the dating, married and spouse samples were .82, .80, and .79 respectively. Alphas for the

"abilities" scale were .75, .84, and .88 in the dating, married, and spouse samples respectively.

Descriptive Analyses

Means and standard deviations for marital satisfaction in the married sample and relationship satisfaction in the dating sample are reported in Table B17. An independent samples *t* –test was performed to determine whether or not there were significant differences in satisfaction between the dating and married participants. Table B17 shows that married participants reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction on the QMI ($t[472]= 3.31$, $p<.01$) but not on the KMS. Effect sizes for these differences are also reported in Table 17. A small effect ($d= .30$) was found for satisfaction responses on the QMI across these samples.

Correlational analyses indicated that the KMS and QMI were strongly and significantly related to each other in both the dating and married samples ($r= .76$ and $r = .84$, $p<.01$, respectively). Given these very strong correlations, these measures were standardized into z-scores and collapsed into a single composite score to simplify additional analyses. The standardized means and standard deviations for both samples are also reported in Table B17.

Means and standard deviations for the relationship uncertainty subscales and the self uncertainty subscales are reported in Table B18. Results of independent samples *t*-tests and effect-sizes are also reported in Table B18; they are further discussed below in the section on hypothesis testing.

Table B19 reports (a) the intercorrelations among the relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty subscales and (b) between these scales and satisfaction in the dating and

married samples. Intercorrelations among the relationship uncertainty subscales, in the dating sample, range from r= .43 to r= .84. In the married sample, inter-correlations among the relationship uncertainty subscales range from r= .43 to r=.79. The ranges in magnitude of the correlations suggest that these subscales are tapping into distinct and different aspects of relationship uncertainty. However, the mutuality and definition subscales were collapsed in each sample, given the strong magnitude of their association. The self uncertainty subscales are significantly and strongly correlated with each other in both the dating and married samples (r= .92, r= .90, p<.01, respectively). Given the magnitude of the association between these self uncertainty subscales, use of a single composite of these scales appears appropriate in additional analyses; this composite therefore was created by combining the scores on these subscales.

It is also of note that all of the relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty scales are significantly and negatively correlated with satisfaction. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of uncertainty also expressed lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Correlations between the combined subscales are presented in Table B20 for both the dating and married samples.

Means and standard deviations for the relational comparison tendencies factor scales (RC, PARC, and NARC) and SCO factor scales (Opinions and Abilities) are reported for each sample in Table B21. Significant differences were found between the dating and married samples on RC, NARC and SCO Abilities factor scale scores. These results are reported in Table B21 and further discussed in detail in relation to the hypothesis testing.

Table B22 reports means and standard deviations for the BFI scales, PANAS scales, Cook-Medley Ho, AQ hostility and dispositional envy. Independent samples *t*-tests were performed to determine whether or not dating and married individuals were significantly different from each other on these personality variables. Table B22 reports *t*-tests, significance levels and effect sizes for each variable. On the BFI, significant differences were found on extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness ($t[462]= -2.52$, $p<.05$; $t[462]= 6.32$, $t[462]= 3.36$, $p< .01$ respectively). Specifically, dating individuals reported significantly higher levels of extraversion, whereas married individuals reported higher levels of openness and conscientiousness. This was a small to moderate effect for openness and conscientiousness ($d=.31$ and $d= .59$, respectively).

On the PANAS, dating individuals reported significantly higher levels of negative affect, in comparison to married individuals ($t[462]= 3.68$, $p< .01$). Dating individuals also reported significantly higher levels of hostility, on both the Cook-Medley and AQ measures, and dispositional envy, than married individuals ($t[462]= -7.67, -8.36, -7.38$, $p< .01$, respectively). These were medium effects ($d= -.71, -.78, -.69$, respectively).

Table B23 reports the inter-correlations between the relational comparison tendencies factor scales, general social comparison orientation factor scales and satisfaction in both the dating and married samples. Among the relational comparison tendencies factor scales, the largest relation is between the RC scale and the NARC scale in both the dating and married samples ($r= .63$, $r= .57$, $p< .01$, respectively). Additionally, the largest negative relation is between satisfaction and NARC in both the dating and married samples ($r= -.46$, $r= -.58$, $p< .01$, respectively). Therefore, in these data, individuals who engage in frequent comparisons containing negative affect also

have lower levels of satisfaction in their relationships. In addition, frequent general comparisons of aspects of one's relationship and one's partner are weakly, but significantly, associated with lower levels of satisfaction in both the dating and married samples (r=- .13 and -.29, respectively). Interestingly, in both the dating and married samples, PARC scores were weakly, positively associated with satisfaction (r= .21, p<.01; r=.17, p<.05, respectively). These findings suggest that individuals who engage in relationship comparisons with positive affect are happier in their relationships.

Finally, satisfaction was not significantly associated with the SCO Abilities and Opinions factor scales in the married sample; however, responses on the Opinions factor scale were significantly positively associated with satisfaction in the dating sample (r= .16, p< .01). This suggests some modest association between more frequently comparing one's opinions generally and reporting higher levels of satisfaction in one's relationship.

Table 23 also reports inter-correlations between the Big 5 traits and the relational comparison tendencies and SCO factor scales. These results are discussed in further detail in hypothesis testing.

Inter-correlations between the scores on the personality measures are presented in Table B24 for both the dating and married samples. Significant positive correlations between Ho, AQ hostility and dispositional envy were found in both the dating and married samples. The hostility scales were strongly and positively correlated with each other in the dating and married samples (r =.70, r =.69, p <.01), respectively. Given the magnitude of association between the two hostility scales, they were standardized into z-scores and combined into a single composite to simplify additional analyses. For the collapsed hostility variable, in cases where there were excessive amounts of missing data

on the Cook Medley, the Ho score was treated as missing and the standardized AQ hostility score was used.

Inter-correlations with this collapsed hostility variable are presented in Table B24 for both dating and married samples. Significant negative correlations were found between neuroticism and the other personality scales of extraversion (r =-.23, p <.01), openness (r =-.13, p <.01), agreeableness (r =-.42, p <.01), and conscientiousness (r =-.29, p < .01) in the dating sample. In the married sample, only openness was not significantly related to neuroticism (r = -.04, *ns*). Overall, the pattern of correlations between the personality variables was similar to what has been found in previous studies, with traits that have a component of negative affect being significantly positively correlated with each other, while being significantly negatively associated with almost everything else.

Correlations between Big 5 neuroticism, hostility, uncertainty, relational comparison tendencies and general SCO orientation are presented in Table 25. These results are discussed in detail below in the section on hypothesis testing.

Informant (Spouse) Data

To determine agreement levels, correlation coefficients were calculated between the targets' self-ratings on the relational comparison and general social comparison scales and their spouses' ratings of them on the same measures (see Table B26). Correlations with participant reported dispositional envy are also reported. Significant positive correlations were found between participants' self-rated versus spouse-rated general social comparison tendencies on both abilities (r = .28) and opinions (r= .22). Significant positive correlations were also found between (a) participants' self-rated general

relational comparisons and spouse-rated envy (r = .22), as well as (b) self- versus spouse rated envy (r=.22) and (c) self- versus spouse-rated NARC scores (r=.36). Surprisingly, however, there was no significant relation between self- and spouse-rated PARC scores (r = .05). Overall, these findings suggest partners are aware of their spouses' comparison tendencies and affective reactions to comparisons, particularly when they are negative.

Similarly, participants' self-ratings on the BFI were significantly positively correlated with their spouses' ratings of them on this measure (see Table B27). Specifically, significant convergent correlations were found for spouse and self-reported neuroticism (r= .44, p< .01), extraversion, (r= .70, p< .01), agreeableness, (r= .34, p<.01), conscientiousness, (r= .53, p< .01) and openness (r= .39, p< .01). These findings replicate other research on self other agreement, which suggest that visible traits, such as extraversion, can be easily detected and accurately reported on by other individuals.

It also should be noted that spouses' ratings of their own satisfaction were significantly related to their partners' ratings of satisfaction (r=.60, p<.01, 2-tailed). However, spouses' self rated satisfaction was unrelated to their ratings of their partners on all relational comparison tendencies factor scales and SCO factor scales. The exception to this was their ratings of partners on the RCT_NA factor scale. Spouses' self-rated satisfaction was weakly, but significantly related to their RCT_NA ratings (r= -.29, p<.01, 2-tailed). Spouse ratings on the RCT_NA were also significantly related to the participants' self-rated satisfaction (r= -.34, p<.01, 2-tailed). These findings seem to suggest that frequent relational comparisons with negative affect is injurious to satisfaction for both individuals in the relationship.

Hypothesis Testing

Are individuals in dating relationships significantly higher on relational comparison tendencies and relationship uncertainty than individuals in marital relationships?

As previously reported in Table B21, independent samples *t*-tests were performed to determine if there were mean differences between relational comparison tendencies on the factor scales RC, PARC and NARC in the dating and married samples. Analyses revealed dating and married participants marginally differed in RC factor scores ($t[470] = -1.82$, $p < .10$), with married participants reporting slightly less frequent general relational comparisons. Dating individuals significantly differed from married individuals on NARC scores ($t[470] = -3.90$, $p < .01$), again with married individuals reporting lower levels of negative affect relational comparisons. This was a small effect ($d = .36$). There was no significant difference in scores on the PARC factor scale. Only marginal mean differences were found on SCO Abilities, ($t[470] = -1.79$, $p < .10$). Findings indicate some support for the hypothesis specific to general relational comparisons and comparisons with negative affect, with dating individuals engaging in these specific processes more frequently than married individuals.

Similarly, I examined mean differences on the relationship uncertainty behavior, mutuality-definition, and future subscales, as well as the combined desire-evaluation self uncertainty composite. Dating and married participants significantly differed on *all* relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty subscales as previously reported in Table B19 and B20. Dating participants were also significantly more uncertain, in comparison to married individuals, on the overall self uncertainty score ($t[470] = -5.04$, $p < .01$). In essence, dating individuals reported greater relationship uncertainty with regard to

behavior, mutuality/definition and future, as well as uncertainty about their overall desire and evaluation of the worth of their relationships. Therefore, the hypothesis that dating individuals are less certain about their relationships and higher in relational comparison tendencies was largely supported.

Do high levels of relationship uncertainty predict relational comparison tendencies, after controlling for satisfaction, and not significantly predict general social comparison orientation?

Correlations between the relationship uncertainty subscales, relational comparison tendencies factor scales, SCO factor scales and satisfaction are reported in Table B25. All the subscales of relationship uncertainty and overall self uncertainty are weakly to moderately related to the relational comparison tendencies factor scales and not significantly related to SCO factor scale scores in the married sample. The exception is RUS Future is weakly positively related to the SCO Abilities factor scale in the married sample ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). It is of note that the relationship uncertainty scales and self uncertainty are *negatively* correlated with PARC factor scale scores. This suggests that individuals who indicated greater levels of uncertainty made fewer comparisons with positive affect.

In the dating sample, the relationship uncertainty subscales and self uncertainty are also weakly to moderately correlated with the relational comparisons factor scales (see Table B25). The exceptions were that (a) the RC factor scale score was unrelated to self uncertainty and (b) the PARC factor scale score was unrelated to RUS Behavior. In contrast, the SCO Abilities factor scale scores were unrelated to the uncertainty scales, with the exception of RUS Future ($r = .15$, $p < .01$). General SCO Opinions factor scale

scores were significantly correlated with the majority of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty scales, except RUS Future. Again, it is of note that PARC factor scale scores were *negatively* correlated with the majority of the relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty scales.

To examine whether or not relationship uncertainty remains a significant predictor of relational comparison tendencies after controlling for satisfaction, predictor and outcome variables were entered into a hierarchical multiple regression. Multiple correlations and R-squares are reported in Table B28 for the dating sample and Table B29 for the married sample. Regression analyses were performed for each relationship uncertainty scale (behavior, mutuality-definition, and future) predicting each of the relational comparison tendencies factor scales (RC, PARC, NARC).

In the dating sample, there is a trend towards the prediction of RC scores from RUS behavior and future scale scores; however, the significance is only marginal ($p<.10$). Only the combined RUS mutuality-definition scale significantly predicts RC factor scores beyond satisfaction. For PARC and NARC scores all the significant models are based on satisfaction, with the exception of RUS future approaching significance ($p<.10$) in predicting PARC scores. Among married individuals, satisfaction emerges as the overall strongest predictor for RC and NARC scores. Only future uncertainty remains significant when predicting RC scores, and only combined mutuality-definition remains significant when predicting PARC scores.

Table B30 reports regression analyses for the prediction of relational comparison tendencies factor scales from overall self uncertainty after controlling for satisfaction in both the dating and married samples. Among both dating and married individuals,

satisfaction emerges as the strongest predictor of NARC factor scores. Self uncertainty failed to emerge as a significant predictor in any analysis.

Therefore, the hypothesis that relationship uncertainty would significantly predict relationship comparison tendencies even after controlling for satisfaction was partially confirmed in the dating and married samples. Due to the fact that the general SCO factor scale scores were unrelated or weakly related to satisfaction in both samples, and weakly correlated with relationship uncertainty in the dating sample only, a regression analysis of whether or not relationship or self uncertainty predicts general comparison orientation seemed unnecessary.

Is marital satisfaction more strongly related to relationship social comparison tendencies than general social comparison orientation?

As reported in Table B25, satisfaction is significantly negatively correlated with the factor scales of (a) RC and (b) NARC, whereas it is significantly positively related to PARC scores and unrelated to the general SCO scales in the married sample. In the dating sample, the SCO Opinions factor is weakly positively related to satisfaction. To determine whether or not satisfaction correlates more strongly with the relational comparisons factor scales than with the general SCO factor scales, a Hotelling's T-square test was performed on these correlations in both the dating and married samples. This test is commonly used to test for the significance of the difference between correlated correlation coefficients (Meng, Rosenthal & Rubin, 1992). This test can be used to investigate correlations from the same sample, which are dependent correlations. The absolute value of the correlation coefficient was used, so that differences in sign (i.e.

positive or negative) would not have an impact. The results of this test are reported in Table B31.

In the married sample, four of the six correlational comparisons were significant; specifically, both of the correlations involving (a) RC scores and (b) NARC scores were significantly stronger than those of the SCO scales; in contrast, neither of the comparisons involving the PARC scores reached significance in this sample. In the dating sample, three of the six comparisons (SCO Abilities vs. comparisons with PARC and NARC; SCO Opinions with NARC) were significant. Overall, therefore, 7 of 12 tests were significant, and it is noteworthy that all of the tests involving negative affect comparisons were highly significant. Thus, these data replicate previous research that suggests satisfaction is unrelated to general comparison orientation and more strongly related to relationship social comparisons (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008).

Are neuroticism/negative affectivity and hostility significantly associated with relationship uncertainty, relational comparison tendencies, and social comparison orientation?

The correlation matrix in Table 25 shows support for this hypothesis in both the dating and married samples. BFI neuroticism scores are significantly correlated with the RC factor scale scores (r =.26 and .32 in the dating and married samples, respectively) and NARC scores (r =.27 and .38 in the dating and married samples, respectively) in both samples. PANAS negative affectivity showed a similar pattern of associations with the relational comparison tendencies factor scales in both samples. Neuroticism was significantly, positively associated with SCO Abilities in both the dating and married samples, but not with SCO Opinions in either sample.

This same pattern of relations was also found for PANAS negative affectivity in the dating and married samples. Neuroticism was significantly associated with relationship uncertainty on all subscales in the married sample, but not in the dating sample. However, PANAS negative affectivity scores were significantly correlated with all of the relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty scales in both samples.

It is also of note, as previously reported in Table B25, that SCO Opinions was significantly, but weakly, correlated with extraversion, openness, and agreeableness in the dating sample (all three *r*s = .20) but not in the married sample. Additionally, NARC scores were significantly, negatively correlated with agreeableness, although this correlation was relatively small in both the dating and married samples (r= -.22, p<.01, r= -.15, p<.05, respectively).

These findings may suggest that for dating individuals, general opinion social comparisons may be related to a more basic interpersonal interaction style (i.e., more talkative, open and agreeable with others). Furthermore, findings suggest that negative affect relational comparisons seem to be more frequent among individuals who are generally less agreeable. In combination, less agreeable individuals who also frequently engage in negative affect relational comparisons may have greater difficulty navigating romantic relationships and, in turn, be less satisfied with them.

Table B25 also reports the relations between hostility and the relationship uncertainty scales, self uncertainty, and the relational comparison tendencies and SCO factor scales. Hostility was significantly correlated with all target variables except PARC scores and SCO Opinions in both the dating and married samples. Although the relations between hostility, the relational comparison tendencies and SCO factor scales were

significant as hypothesized, findings show the association actually is counter to the hypothesized direction of association. Explanations for this finding are explored more in the discussion.

Supplemental Analyses

I ran some supplemental analyses to explore further the role of satisfaction and uncertainty in the prediction of relational comparison tendencies. As discussed previously, satisfaction appeared to be a better predictor, in some cases, than uncertainty when entered first into the regression model against each type of uncertainty individually. In an attempt to explicate these relations, I entered the uncertainty subscales together into a hierarchical regression at the first step and then entered satisfaction in the second step. Tables B32 and B33 report the multiple correlations for these models in the dating and married samples respectively. Satisfaction was not a significant predictor of RC factor scale scores in the dating sample; however, only mutuality/definition uncertainty remained marginally significant when included with satisfaction ($p<.10$) in the model. In the prediction of PARC scores, satisfaction was marginally significant ($p<.10$) and future uncertainty remained a significant predictor ($p<.05$) among dating participants. Lastly, in the prediction of NARC scores, satisfaction was a significant predictor beyond all three types of uncertainty ($p<.01$), which were nonsignificant with satisfaction in the model.

In the married sample, for the prediction of RC scores, only future uncertainty remained a significant predictor ($p<.01$) when satisfaction was included in the model. Mutuality/definition uncertainty remained a significant predictor ($p<.05$) of PARC scores, while there was no significant incremental predictive power by satisfaction.

Finally, satisfaction was again a significant predictor of NARC scores ($p<.01$) beyond all three types of uncertainty.

Multiple correlations for self uncertainty and satisfaction are presented in Table B34 for both the dating and married samples. In the dating sample, satisfaction mariginally predicted RC scores beyond self uncertainty ($p<.10$) and did not significantly predict PARC scores. In the case of NARC scale scores, however, satisfaction was a significant predictor beyond self uncertainty ($p<.01$). In the married sample, satisfaction did not provide any incremental predictive power in the prediction of RC or PARC scores. However, satisfaction again was a significant predictor beyond self uncertainty ($p<.01$) of NARC scores. These findings suggest, in combination with the previous regression analyses, that satisfaction is the primary contributor to comparisons with negative affect, whereas uncertainty appears to play a more significant role in general relational comparisons and comparisons with positive affect.

In addition, I ran a series of analyses to examine the potential influence of key demographic variables. The demographic variables of age, gender, and length of relationship were examined in relation to the primary variables of interest. Due to the fact that the distribution of race was extremely restricted and skewed in both samples, it was not examined in these additional analyses. There was also a restricted range for age in the dating sample; therefore, age was only examined in relation to target variables in the married sample.

Correlations between age (in years), length of relationship (in months), gender and all the target study variables, including uncertainty, relational comparison tendencies, general social comparison orientation, Big Five traits and satisfaction were examined in

both the dating (see Table B36) and married samples (see Table B35)—with the exception of age in the dating sample, as previously mentioned. In the married sample, age was weakly related to satisfaction (r= -.18) as well as the personality variables of agreeableness and negative affectivity, (r= .17, r=-.20, p<.05), respectively. These findings indicate that older married participants were less satisfied in their marriages and they tended to be more agreeable and lower on negative affectivity. Age, in the married sample, was also weakly associated with PARC and SCO Abilities factor scores (r= -.18, p<.05; r=-.24, p<.01). These findings establish that older participants made fewer comparisons with positive affect about their marriages and compared their own abilities less often to those of others.

In regards to the associations between length of relationship and the target study variables in both the dating and married samples, broadly, there were no significant associations, with a few exceptions. In the dating sample, length of relationship was weakly related to relationship uncertainty mutuality/definition (r= -.15) and extraversion (r= .13). These findings suggest for dating individuals relationship uncertainty, with regards to mutuality and definition, decreases with time in the relationship. With regard to personality, extraverted individuals tend to be in relationships longer. In the married sample, length of marriage was associated with agreeableness, conscientiousness and negative affectivity (r=.15, .14, -.15, p<.05, respectively). Additionally, length of marriage was related to SCO Abilities (r=-.20, p<.01). These findings indicate that individuals who are more agreeable, more conscientious and have lower levels of negative affectivity tended to be in marriages for longer periods of time. Additionally, in

these data, individuals' tendencies to compare their own abilities were less frequent with time in marriage.

I also examined the associations between gender and the target variables in both the dating and married sample. For data analytic purposes men were coded as 1 and women were entered as 2. With regards to uncertainty, gender was correlated with self (r=-.23) and relationship uncertainty, including behavioral, mutuality/definition and future uncertainty in the dating sample (r= -.15, -.27, -.14, respectively); however, in the married sample, it was only associated with behavioral uncertainty (r= -.15). As far as personality variables, in the dating sample, gender was related to neuroticism and extraversion, (r=.18, .24, p<.01, respectively). In both the dating and married samples it was associated with agreeableness (r= .24, r= .14) and conscientiousness (r= .14, r= .32), respectively. Finally, with regards to satisfaction and general social comparison/relational comparison tendencies—in the dating sample—gender was associated with satisfaction (r= .18), as well as SCO opinions scale (r=.27). In the married sample, gender was associated with RC scores (r=.18) and SCO opinions (r=.24).

Overall, these data suggest men and women differed in areas of relationship uncertainty in both the dating and married samples, as well as on some specific personality traits in both samples. Men and women did not differ in marital satisfaction; however, they did differ in relationship satisfaction among dating individuals. In regards to relational comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation, men and women did not differ on these dimensions with a few exceptions. In the dating and married samples, women indicated higher levels of social comparison orientation as it

related to opinions. Additionally women showed a greater tendency for general relational comparisons than men in the married sample.

The influence of the aforementioned demographic variables was examined in the context of some of the study hypotheses. Specifically, age, in the married sample, and length of relationship and gender in both samples, were entered into hierarchical regression analyses to predict relational comparison tendencies from uncertainty and satisfaction. In both the dating and married samples, controlling for length of relationship, with uncertainty and satisfaction in the model, had no influence on the findings which were previously discussed. Nor did length of relationship significantly predict relational comparison tendencies.

Gender was separately entered into additional hierarchical regression analyses to examine its influence on the prediction of relational comparison tendencies, from uncertainty and satisfaction. In regards to its influence on relationship uncertainty and satisfaction in the model, gender significantly predicted RC scores ($p<.05$) beyond satisfaction, along with mutuality/defintion uncertainty in the dating sample ($p<.05$) and future uncertainty in the married sample ($p<.05$). Gender did not significantly predict PARC or NARC scores, nor did it influence the pattern of results discussed previously, in the dating and married samples. When self uncertainty and satisfaction were in the model, gender was a significant predictor of RC scores ($p<.05$), in both the dating and married samples. Satisfaction was also a significant predictor, with gender, of RC scores in the dating sample ($p<.05$), but not in the married sample. Gender was not a significant predictor of PARC or NARC scores in the dating and married samples, with self uncertainty and satisfaction in these regression analyses.

Lastly, in the married sample, age was examined separately from gender and length of relationship in regression analyses for the prediction of relational comparison tendencies from relationship or self uncertainty and satisfaction. Age alone was the best predictor of PARC scores ($p<.05$), when entered into analyses with relationship uncertainty or self uncertainty scores and satisfaction. Age and satisfaction ($p<.05$) were the only significant predictors of NARC scores, when entered with relationship uncertainty scores or self uncertainty scores.

Broadly, these findings suggest that length of relationship is not a primary factor in relational comparison tendencies within romantic relationships. Furthermore, gender, in combination with specific types of uncertainty, plays a significant role in general relational comparisons within relationships for both dating and married individuals. Interestingly, age, in the married sample appears to play the strongest role in the prediction of comparisons with positive affect and, in combination with satisfaction, has a significant place in the prediction comparisons with negative affect. This finding, however, is not as surprising given the nature of the correlations between age and PARC scores and age and satisfaction. In both cases, as previously mentioned, correlations between these constructs suggest that older participants made fewer comparisons with positive affect and also were less satisfied with their marriages. These correlational findings, in turn, explicate further the predictive nature of age in relation to comparisons with positive affect and comparisons with negative affect.

Tables B37-B39 report the partial correlations for neuroticism, negative affectivity, hostility, uncertainty, relational comparison tendencies, SCO and satisfaction controlling for length of relationship (Table B37) and gender (Table B38) in both the

dating and married samples, as well as age (Table B39) in the married sample only. The correlations that are relevant to 1) the third study hypothesis—whether or not marital/relationship satisfaction is more strongly related to relational comparison tendencies than to general social comparison orientation—and 2) the fourth study hypothesis—whether or not neuroticism/negative affectivity and hostility are associated with uncertainty, relational comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation—are highlighted.

The pattern of correlations between satisfaction, relational comparison tendencies factor scales and SCO factor scales are similar to the correlations reported earlier in Table B25. Common index analyses of these correlations did not yield results different from what is reported in Table B31. Therefore, as previously discussed, relational comparison tendencies are more strongly related to satisfaction than to general SCO abilities and opinions, with the exception of RC and PARC scores in the dating and married samples. The pattern of these partial correlations is also similar to the zero-order correlations found in Table B25, with regards to neuroticism, negative affectivity and hostility. These findings confirm that neuroticism/negative affectivity and hostility are significantly associated with relationship uncertainty, RC, and NARC factor scale scores, as previously discussed.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study presents a number of novel findings that have previously not been represented in the published literature on the social comparison or relationship domains. Additionally, these findings were able to address the primary goals of this study, which were to a) examine whether or not relationship social comparison tendencies and relationship uncertainty scores differ as a function of type of relationship (i.e. dating vs. marital); b) examine whether relationship uncertainty is associated with—and predictive of—relationship social comparison tendencies; c) investigate the associations among marital (relationship) satisfaction, relationship comparison tendencies, and general social comparison orientation; and d) examine how the personality characteristics of hostility and neuroticism are broadly related to relationship uncertainty, relationship social comparison tendencies, and general social comparison orientation. Reviews of these goals in relation to the results of this study are examined in detail next.

Findings from this study demonstrate there are important differences between dating and married individuals. In regards to their relationships, married and dating individuals significantly differed on their level of satisfaction, certainty, and relationship comparison tendencies. The hypothesis that dating individuals are more uncertain in their relationships than married individuals was supported. This is not surprising, given that the inherent nature of the marital relationship typically provides a particular type of certainty that is not present in dating relationships. In particular, married individuals already have a level of commitment and, therefore, certainty about their partner and relationship that dating individuals do not. Supplemental analyses, futher demonstrated that this uncertainty is primarily experienced by men in dating relationships. However, as

this study shows, married individuals are not immune to uncertainty within their relationships; moreover, when uncertainty is experienced, it results in the same negative outcome of lower levels of satisfaction.

With regard to their personalities, dating individuals reported significantly higher levels of hostility and negative affect, but also extraversion. Hostility and negative affect had significant negative relations with satisfaction. In contrast, married individuals reported higher levels of conscientiousness and openness. Gender also had a role in some of these personality differences. In these data, openness was weakly associated with higher levels of satisfaction, in the married sample. Individual differences on these traits may provide some explanation for the basis of differences in satisfaction and, possibly, interactional styles within the relationship, for dating versus married individuals.

These personality differences in the dating and married samples were also consistent with what is known about general age-related trends in personality. The average age of participants in the dating sample was close to 19 years of age, while the average age of participants in the married sample was close to 40 years. Research has previously shown there is significant mean-level change among personality traits during young adulthood, age 20 to 40, in a positive direction (Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006). People become more socially dominant, which is a facet of extraversion, more conscientious, and more emotionally stable.

According to some research, most of these changes occur in young adulthood. However in several cases, for example, as with conscientiousness, these changes can also occur in middle and old age (Roberts et al., 2006). Research has also found that individuals demonstrated gains in social vitality and openness to experience early in life

and then decreases in these two trait domains in old age. Therefore, traits like openness show a curvilinear trend (Roberts et al., 2006).

The findings in the current study appear to provide additional evidence for significant mean-level changes in personality throughout young adulthood. Additionally, this research supports findings that suggest these changes are primarily positive. Specifically, my findings and other research on these changes demonstrate that individuals become less hostile and neurotic, more open and more conscientious. As previously suggested, from a dyadic approach, these positive changes in personality may directly affect individuals' interactions and satisfaction with their romantic partners.

Another significant difference in functioning between dating and married individuals is the fact that dating individuals tended to engage in more frequent comparisons with negative affect, as well as more frequent general relational comparisons, than married individuals. Both of these comparison processes are shown to be damaging to satisfaction in these data, and possibly, in turn, increase uncertainty about the future of the relationship, the desirability and worth of the relationship, and thoughts about the ending of the relationship. The fact that dating individuals engage in these maladaptive comparison processes more frequently may additionally explain the difference in satisfaction between dating and married individuals.

It is clear from these data that relationship comparison tendencies are weakly to moderately related to various types of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty, for both dating and married individuals. Relational comparisons with negative affect showed the largest association with uncertainty, overall. However, uncertainy and satisfaction were also strongly related to each other in both the dating and married samples. Findings

were mixed regarding the prediction that uncertainty would predict relational comparison tendencies, above and beyond satisfaction. In both samples, satisfaction was generally a better predictor of relational comparison tendencies than any of the specific types of relationship or self uncertainty scales, with a few exceptions. Future uncertainty and combined mutuality-definition uncertainty were able to predict specific types of relationship comparison tendencies (such as general relational comparisons and relational comparisons with positive affect, in the married sample, respectively) beyond satisfaction. Furthermore, results for some of the uncertainty scales approached significance, suggesting a trend where both satisfaction and uncertainty were significant predictors of relational comparison tendencies. The supplemental analyses examining satisfaction and uncertainty appear to clarify further that satisfaction is the best predictor of comparisons with negative affect. Whereas, some specific types of uncertainty are better predictors of general relational comparisons, and in combination with satisfaction, comparisons with positive affect.

In general, findings showed that satisfaction, in both the dating and married samples, was significantly, negatively related to relational comparison tendencies and unrelated to general social comparison orientation, with a few exceptions. Specifically, only frequent general relational comparisons and relational comparisons with negative affect were associated with lower levels of satisfaction for both dating and married individuals. Alternatively, relational comparisons with positive affect had a weak positive association with satisfaction in both samples. This finding suggests some increase in satisfaction for those individuals with frequent comparisons containing positive affect.

Moreover, whereas the basic factors of general social comparison orientation (i.e., abilities and opinions) were unrelated to satisfaction in the married sample, the opinions dimension was weakly, positively related to satisfaction in the dating sample. One possible explanation for this relation is that this dimension of general social comparison orientation is also positively associated with extraversion, openness, and agreeableness among dating individuals. Therefore, the relation between opinions and satisfaction may be a function of the shared positive valence with these personality traits, some of which are also positively related to satisfaction. Additionally, the significant association between comparing one's opinions and one's satisfaction may be a function of the behavioral aspects of being interested and attentive to what others think and feel, including one's partner. It is also of note, that the various relational comparisons and general social comparison orientation dimensions tended to be significantly, positively associated with each other in both the dating and married samples.

As predicted, the various dimensions of relational comparison tendencies were significantly related to the personality traits of hostility, negative affect, and envy. However the relations between relational comparison tendencies and hostility were not in the expected direction. Overall, general relational comparisons and relational comparisons with negative affect both were positively associated with hostility, negative affectivity and envy. In contrast, it was hypothesized that relational comparison tendencies would be negatively correlated with hostility. However, general relational comparisons and relational comparisons with negative affect appear to be tapping some of the same "bad" cognitive and affective aspects as hostility and neuroticism/negative affectivity, making the relations between the constructs positive. It is also of note that

relational comparisons with negative affect were significantly, negatively related to other personality traits, such agreeableness, in both the dating and married samples, which further illustrates the damaging and negative aspects of this construct.

These associations between hostility and negative affectivity also apply to various domains of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty, especially among married individuals. In these data, hostility and negative affectivity were moderately to strongly related to the various dimensions of relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty, which provides additional evidence of the negative affective and cognitive aspects of uncertainty. It is unclear where general social comparison orientation falls in this domain due to the fact that associations between neuroticism, negative affectivity and hostility were inconsistent between the general social comparison orientation subscales from sample to sample.

The collection of informant ratings on individuals' relational comparison tendencies and social comparison orientation was a novel investigation of these constructs. Examination of the relations between ratings of relational comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation dimensions among married individuals and their spouses showed significant convergence for all the dimensions except relational comparisons with positive affect. There was also significant convergence for self and spouse rated envy and self- versus spouse-rated personality traits on the Big Five. Additionally, participants' self-ratings on the positive and negative affectivity scales were significantly correlated with spouse ratings of their neuroticism and extraversion. By and large, findings suggest that comparison orientation, be it general

or relationship-specific, are trait-like constructs that have identifiable behavioral markers that can be reported on by others.

Analyses of key demographic variables were able to provide additional information as to how these variables relate to personality and how they influence comparison processes which operate within romantic relationships. In regards to personality, length of relationship was correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of these traits have longer relationships, specifically among married individuals. Additionally, length of relationship was related to lower levels of negative affectivity among married individuals. Among dating individuals, although the relation was small, higher levels of extraversion was associated with longer relationships. These findings, specifically in regards to agreeableness, conscientiousness, and negative affectivity replicate what is already known about the influence of personality in romantic relationships. Previous research has suggested that individuals who are more agreeable, more conscientious, and more emotionally stable (i.e. low negative affect) have higher levels of satisfaction with their relationships (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; Heller & Watson, 2005). Therefore, it follows that these individuals mau be able to sustain relationships for longer periods of time.

Gender was also significantly related to personality in a number of instances. Women in dating relationships tended to report higher levels of neuroticism, but also agreeableness and conscientiousness. This finding was replicated among married women, with the exception of neuroticism. Again, these findings are supportive of previous research as it relates to gender differences and age related trends in personality,

specifically as it pertains to neuroticism. Lastly, an examination of age in the married sample, yielded a small but significant relation between age and higher levels of agreeableness. As discussed previously, this is consistent with what is known about mean-level changes in this trait over time.

Lastly, important associations between these demographic variables and the comparison processes, which were of primary interest in this study, were found. Specifically, length of relationship, in the dating sample, was associated with some decrement in uncertainty as it relates to mutuality and definition of the relationship. Gender was also associated with uncertainty and general relational comparisons. In particular, men expressed more uncertainty and women reported engaging in more frequent general relational comparisons. Additionally, gender, in combination with specific types of uncertainty, was a significant predictor of general relational comparisons within relationships for both dating and married individuals. Age, among married individuals was associated with fewer comparions with positive affect and lower levels of marital satisfaction. Moreover, age was the strongest predictor of comparisons with positive affect and—in combination with satisfaction—was a significant predictor of comparisons with negative affect. These specific findings are interesting because there is research that suggests declines in marital satisfaction over time of relationship (i.e. Karney & Bradbury, 1997), but there is little or no research that looks at age-specific declines satisfaction.

In all, the primary goals of the study were met and have provided greater clarity in understanding the role of comparison processes in romantic relationships. Additionally, this investigation has provided a basis for future research. There are still a number of

issues surrounding the Relationship Social Comparison Measure (RSCM) that additional research may be able to address. Prior research has shown that the measure has weak to moderate convergent validity with general social comparison orientation. This research was able to replicate this finding and additionally show that the RSCM has convergent relations with the construct of envy, which is the affective response (i.e. a sense of inferiority) to unfavorable social comparisons (Smith et al., 1999). The items of the RSCM primarily address relationship comparisons in different domains of a relationship and has no content related to emotions resulting from comparisons. Therefore, its correlation with envy may suggest that these comparisons in the RSCM result in mostly negative affective responses. These types of comparisons therefore may be important to relationship outcomes because they are damaging to the individuals' view the relationship. Additional research may be able to validate this outcome.

I expected that factor analyses of the items of the RSCM would reveal distinct dimensions for the various types of comparisons that were represented in the item content. Factor analyses in these data, however, show that the items of the RSCM are best represented by a large general factor. Overall, with one exception, the items of the measure loaded moderately to strongly on the first unrotated factor. Across the two samples, additional replicable factors did not emerge. The fact that the RSCM may broadly reflect a general relationship social comparison domain was further substantiated by the factor analyses with the additional relationship comparison tendencies items. In these subsequent factor analyses, with the additional items, the RSCM items largely remained a single factor.

Although the original items of the Relationship Social Comparison Measure did not create clear, replicable factors, it is apparent from the addition of the relationship comparison tendencies items that the comparison processes in the current samples are represented by three basic dimensions: general relational comparisons, positive affect relational comparisons and negative affect relational comparisons. The RSCM as a composite scale may be useful; however it is only providing a portion of information about what goes on within relational comparison processes, especially as it relates to positive and negative affect.

It is of note that it was expected that factor analyses of the RSCM and the additional relationship comparison tendencies items would reveal multiple factors based on the specific content of comparisons. Thus, factors related to the domains of friendship/intimacy factor or communication/problem-solving were expected. However, those factors failed to emerge in these data. It appears that the specific domain of the comparisons, such as comparisons based on communication or problem-solving within the relationship, were less salient than the types of emotional response or emotions/mood that initiated the comparisons. Therefore, as previously stated, the primary dimensions that emerged were based on general relationship comparisons (across various relationship domains), relationship comparisons with positive affect (i.e. positive affective response or positive initial mood) and relationship comparisons with negative affect (i.e. negative affective response or negative initial mood).

Based on these findings, however, the question of whether or not relational comparisons are a maladaptive process as suggested by some research (Smith Le Beau & Bucking ham, 2008) or a maintenance process (Frye & Karney, 2002) may be answered,

in part. If the three factors found in these data are truly representative of the latent domains of comparisons then the comparison process can be broken down into general relational comparisons, relational comparison processes with positive affect and relational comparison processes with negative affect. From this structure, we can now begin to identify and disconnect distinct maladaptive processes from possible relationship maintenance strategies.

It is clear that relational comparisons with positive affect need to be separated from relational comparisons with negative affect and general relational comparisons. Previous research suggested that frequent comparisons within the dynamic of relationships leads to negative outcomes (Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). These data suggest that there are markedly different implications for relationship and marital satisfaction for those who frequently engage in relational comparisons that have a negative affective component—including hostility, sadness, anxiety or depression after making the comparison or prior to the comparison—than relational comparisons with a positive affective component. Furthermore, the repercussions of frequent general relational comparisons, dealing with equity in different domains of the relationship, are different than those for engaging in positive affect relational comparisons. Expressly, these types of negative affective and general relational comparisons are detrimental to satisfaction, in both dating and marital relationships.

This study provides evidence that engagement in comparison processes with positive affect can bolster satisfaction and, therefore, that all comparison processes within relationships should not be treated as maladaptive. The maladaptive nature of general relational comparisons and negative affect relational comparisons is further confirmed by

the fact that these constructs are significantly *positively* associated with neuroticism/negative affectivity and hostility. In contrast, relational comparisons with positive affect tended to be *negatively* associated with these negative affective constructs. Thus, these findings allow for a better synthesis of the conflicting findings of previous research regarding the negative *and* positive effects of relational comparisons (Frye & Karney, 2002; Buunk, 2006; Smith LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008). Consequently, the answer to whether or not comparison processes are helpful or deleterious to a relationship may be: relational comparisons with positive affect can benefit relationships, whereas relational comparisons with negative affect can harm them.

More broadly, the question of the necessity of a measure or scales specific to relationship social comparisons, above and beyond a general social comparison measure, can also be answered. The findings from this study suggest that relationship social comparison measures/scales provide distinct, important information about relationship outcomes that cannot be fully understood or explained through a general social comparison orientation measure. Generally, relationship and marital satisfaction were either unrelated or weakly related to the general social comparison orientation factor scales. This fact suggests a need for scales specific to relationship comparisons when attempting to understand the implications of the comparison process on relationship outcomes. Additionally, the fact that the correlations between relationship social comparisons and satisfaction tended to be stronger than the correlations between general social comparison orientation and satisfaction supports the necessity of a more specific measure when examining important relationship outcomes, such as satisfaction.

Some understanding of individual differences in comparison processes, both general and relationship specific, has also been established. This study provides some evidence that relationship comparison tendencies may have a trait-like component, due to differences on this construct not being strongly influenced by situational aspects, such as uncertainty. If Festinger's original hypothesis is accurate that people compare themselves when they are uncertain, then it would follow that for specific domains such as relationships, uncertainty would be also be a driving factor; however, in these data, uncertainty, of any type, was not a consistent predictor of the various relationship comparison tendencies scales beyond satisfaction. The reason for this may be explained by the trait-like nature of the construct. An alternative explanation, however, is that for relational comparisons, neither uncertainty nor personality is the primary precondition, but that satisfaction may be the driving mechanism.

However, some additional support for the trait-like aspects of relationship comparison tendencies is provided in the convergent relations between spouse data and target participant ratings on these dimensions. Findings were similar to other individual difference research on trait visibility with classic personality traits such as extraversion and neuroticism. This study shows that spouses are able, to some extent, accurately report on their partners' comparison tendencies, be it general social comparisons or relationship social comparisons. However, this ability did not appear to generalize to relationship comparison tendencies with positive affect. The fact that spouses are able to accurately identify when their partners engage in frequent negative comparisons may further explain the deleterious effects relational comparisons with negative affect have on satisfaction.

Even though there were a number of interesting findings reported in the study and support for some of the hypotheses, there are also some limitations to be addressed. These limitations include generalizability and replicability of findings, the cross-sectional nature of the study, and the correlational design of the research. Generalizability of findings is frequently an issue for basic and applied research. The characteristics of the individuals who did choose to participate in this research may be different from those individuals who did not participate; therefore, the findings may not be broadly applicable to all individuals and all romantic relationships. Of greater concern, however are the characteristics of the two samples; specifically the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in these samples may limit our ability to apply these findings to individuals in racial and ethnic categories other than Caucasian. However, there is no specific research on social comparison in romantic relationships that demonstrates that these processes would be different for other ethnic groups. This may also be an opportunity to expand these findings in future research to determine if there are differences not only between married and dating populations, but also underrepresented populations and various ethnic groups.

As with generalizability, whether or not these results would replicate in similar samples can be a concern for all basic and applied research. Of particular concern for these data are the replicability of factors found in the factor analyses of the Relationship Social Comparison Measure and the relationship comparison tendencies items. This research provides the first evidence of a three factor structure of these items. Although the factor similarity analyses suggest that essentially the same three factors were found in both the dating and married samples, it is of some concern that the comparability coefficients for factors in the dating and married samples approached the .90 benchmark

but did not achieve it for the factor of negative affect relational comparisons. It is important to confirm the robustness and generalizability of this factor, especially since negative affect relational comparisons seem to have the largest detrimental impact on relationship and marital satisfaction in comparison to other types of relational comparison tendencies.

This study also employs a cross-sectional methodology, which is essentially a snap-shot of how these relational comparison processes function in the short-term. It is unknown, therefore, whether or not there would be changes in how the variables of interest, including relational comparison tendencies, general social comparison orientation and relationship/self uncertainty, relate to satisfaction longitudinally. Whether or not individuals change in their level and frequency of relational comparisons over time is undetermined. Nonetheless, if comparison tendencies are trait-like in nature, then they may also demonstrate stability similar to that of other personality traits. Again, however, this is unknown.

A full and definitive understanding of how all of these processes work and relate to each other is also limited by the correlational nature of this research. As with all correlational studies, causation can not be inferred from significant relations. Therefore, it is not possible to know, for example, whether or not relational comparison tendencies are caused by satisfaction or, conversely, cause satisfaction. However, given the nature of these variables, some of which are traits or at least trait-like, it would be very difficult to use experimental manipulations to investigate the relations among them. Therefore, a correlational design is the most appropriate approach in these instances.

Taken as a whole, several factors strengthen my confidence in these results. The careful examination of constructs in two independent samples provides some cross-validation for the relations presented. Additionally, the use of both a dating and married sample further spotlights whether or not these interactions are present early in relationships and whether or not they carry over to different levels of relationships. Furthermore, the use of multiple questionnaires for various constructs in both samples and multiple modes of assessment of constructs, specifically the use of informant ratings in the married sample, provides some support for the stability of these findings.

This study has provided the foundation for a number of areas of investigation for future research. It is evident that additional research is needed on the factors found from the factor analysis of the Relationship Social Comparison Measure and relationship comparison tendencies items in these data. The replication of the three factors found within these two samples should be duplicated in other independent samples in order to have the ability to confirm this three factor structure as the true underlying nature of comparison processes among these items. Moreover, research on these factors can also be expanded to examine whether or not these specific types of relational comparison tendencies are associated with other important relationship outcomes, including separation and divorce.

Furthermore, the examination of these types of comparisons longitudinally would provide important information about the long-term effects of frequent relational comparisons with negative affective components, relational comparison with positive affective components and general relational comparisons. It would be particularly interesting to determine whether or not relational comparisons with positive affect

continue to bolster satisfaction over time. These findings as they relate to satisfaction among dating and married individuals should also be examined in more ethnically diverse populations to determine whether or not there are any differences in functioning. Currently, there is no research that explicitly examines these processes in various racial and ethnic groups, as previously stated.

Future research could also expand findings on the role of uncertainty in relationship comparison processes. Additionally, given the associations between relationship uncertainty and self uncertainty in these data, is there a need for two separate measures to examine uncertainty with romantic relationships. Furthermore, it was not fully elucidated by these results whether or not uncertainty truly has no role, or perhaps a weak role in the prediction of relationship comparison tendencies beyond satisfaction. If uncertainty can be excluded as a necessary precondition of relational comparison tendencies, this may further strengthen the argument that relational comparisons are more trait-like than situational in nature, although—just as with other personality traits—they surely are influenced by situational variables. Given the trait-like nature of relational comparison tendencies and general social comparison orientation, a longitudinal examination of their stability also seems necessary to provide further evidence that they can be meaningfully viewed as individual difference constructs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides a new approach to the long-standing domains of social comparison and marital relationships; by integrating these domains, we can better understand how comparison process impact relationship functioning. The findings of this study have specifically provided a better way to synthesize and understand previously conflicting views of the impact of relationship social comparisons on relationship and marital satisfaction. These views can now be understood as specific types of comparisons having independent and distinct effects on outcomes in romantic relationships.

Additionally, this study has provided a clearer view of the association between social comparison and important relationship outcome, namely, satisfaction, as well as the impact of individual differences on this association. Moreover, the characterization and classification of relationship and general social comparison orientation as individual difference variables has been partially confirmed. This is supported by the fact that they follow similar trait visibility principles as other personality variables.

These findings have also provided a rich and solid foundation for future examinations. This research has answered a number of questions and also presented new areas of inquiry in the relationship and social comparison domain that have previously not been examined in published research. In all, the findings from this study can be an important contribution, not only to the social comparison field by clarifying its role in romantic relationships, but also in the relationship domain by explicating the nature and correlates of social comparison processes in intimate relationships.

APPENDIX A
MEASURES

Demographics—(Students)

Today's Date: _____

Age: _____

Sex (please circle one): Male Female

Date of Birth: _____

Race/Ethnicity:

_____

Religion:

_____

Current Year & Semester in school (e.g. freshman, 1st semester):

_____

Is one of your parents widowed? yes no

Are your parents divorced or separated? yes no

If yes, what was your age when parents separated or divorced? _____

No. of self-defined "serious" relationships in the past: _____

About most significant current dating relationship:

Sex of your partner (please circle one): Male Female

When did you meet your partner (try to give rough month & year of when met)?

_____

How long did you know your partner before dating (estimate in months)? _____

Age when current relationship began: _____

(*If you are engaged):*

How long after you started dating did you decide to get engaged? _____

When are you planning on getting married? _____
(if you are married)

How long have you been married (in **months**)?_____

(If you are living together):

How long have you been living together? _____

If you have lived together in the past (but are not currently living together):

How long did you live together? _____

Demographics—UI Community

Today's Date: _____

Age: _____

Sex (please circle one): Male Female

Date of Birth: _____

Race/Ethnicity:

_____

Religion:

_____

Is one of your parents widowed? yes no

Are your parents divorced or separated? yes no

If yes, what was your age when parents separated or divorced? _____

No. of self-defined "serious" relationships in the <u>past</u>: _____

<u>Relationship History</u>

Sex of your partner (please circle one): Male Female

When did you meet your partner (try to give rough month & year of when met)?
_____

How long did you know your partner before dating (estimate in months)?
_____ (if began dating right away please indicate "0"**)**

Age when current relationship began: _____

How long after you started dating did you decide to get engaged? _____

Date of wedding:_____

How long have you been married (in <u>months</u>**)?_____**

Did you ever live together? YES NO

If yes, how long (in months)_____

Is this your first marriage? YES NO

Do you have children with your current spouse? YES NO

RCT Items

For the following statements we are interested in if and when people compare their relationships to other couples' relationships. Please think about your current relationship when answering. Rate each of the statements on the following scale:

0= Never
1= Rarely
2= Sometimes
3= Often
4= Always

	0	1	2	3	4
1. I feel happy when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are better than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
2. I feel bad when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are better than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
3. I feel good when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are worse than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
4. I feel sad when I compare my relationship to others' relationships that are worse than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
5. I enjoy comparing my relationship to other couples' relationships.	O	O	O	O	O
6. I find comparing my relationship to other couples' relationships to be unpleasant.	O	O	O	O	O
7. When I am thinking about other relationships it makes me feel better about my own relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
8. When I am thinking about other relationships it makes me see problems in my own relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
9. When I am thinking about other relationships it helps me see positive aspects of my own relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
10. When I am thinking about other relationships it makes me more optimistic about my own relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
11. When I see a happy couple I feel happy about my relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
12. When I see a happy couple I feel distressed about my relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
13. When I see an unhappy couple I feel good about my relationship.	O	O	O	O	O

14. When I see an unhappy couple I feel depressed about my relationship.	O	O	O	O	O
	0	1	2	3	4
15. When I compare my relationship to other people's relationships, I focus on those relationships that are happier than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
16. When I compare my relationship to other people's relationships, I think about those relationships that are worse off than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
17. I avoid thinking about other peoples' relationships that are <u>better</u> off than mine.	O	O	O	O	O
18. I can learn a lot about my relationship by comparing it to other relationships that are working really well.	O	O	O	O	O
19. I can learn a lot about my relationship by looking at other couples who are having a lot of problems.	O	O	O	O	O
20. I can learn more about my relationship by comparing it to very well functioning relationships than by comparing it to those that are functioning poorly.	O	O	O	O	O
21. I compare my relationship to other people's relationships.	O	O	O	O	O
22. I think about my relationship in comparison to other people's relationships.	O	O	O	O	O
23. It is helpful to me to think about how my relationship compares to other people's relationships.	O	O	O	O	O
24. I compare how my partner is in our relationship to how others' partners are in their relationships	O	O	O	O	O

RCT Spouses

The following statements relate to tendencies or behaviors that may be characteristic of your spouse. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the items on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale, in which 1 = *strongly disagree,* 2 =*moderately disagree,* 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *moderately agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*.

My spouse tends to:

1. Frequently compare him or herself to others.

2. Compare how well (s)he is doing in life to how well others are doing in life.

3. Become frustrated to see some people succeed so easily.

4. Be troubled by feelings of inadequacy.

5. Feel envious or inferior to others.

6. Compare how happy we are in our relationship to how happy others are in their relationships.

7. Compare our marriage to relationships that are worse off than ours.

8. Compare our relationship to others' relationships that are better than ours.

9. Feel happy about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are worse than ours.

10. Appear sad after comparing our relationship to those marriages that are happier than ours.

11. Feel good about our marriage after comparing it to other people's marriages that are happier than ours.

12. Seem upset about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are better off than ours.

APPENDIX B
TABLES

Table B1.
Initial Eigenvalues for RSCM and RSCM/RCT Factor Solutions in the Dating and Married Samples

RSCM Factor Solutions				RSCM & RCT Factor Solutions			
Dating		Married		Dating		Married	
Initial Eigenvalues	Variance Explained	Initial Eigenvalues	Variance Explained	Initial Eigenvalues	Variance Explained	Initial Eigenvalues	Variance Explained
10.75	44.78%	9.57	39.88%	15.70	32.70%	14.27	29.74%
1.41	5.88%	1.86	7.76%	3.38	7.00%	4.06	8.45%
1.33	5.55%	1.34	5.59%	2.32	4.80%	2.51	5.22%
1.02	4.24%	1.08	4.48%	1.86	3.88%	1.79	3.72%
0.87	3.64%	1.03	4.30%	1.59	3.31%	1.78	3.70%

Note. RSCM= Relationship Social Comparison Measure; RCT= Relationship Comparison Tendencies. Source: RSCM items from Smith LeBeau, L. & Buckingham, J. (2008). Relationship social comparison tendencies, insecurity, & perceived relationship quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *25*, 71-86.

Table B2.
Principal Factor Analysis: RSCM Loadings on the First Unrotated Factor

Relationship Social Comparison Measure Items	Dating	Married
1. how happy in my relationship to how happy others are in their relationships	.68	.69
2. resolve problems compared to how well other couples solve their problems.	.59	.58
3. what types of activities my partner and I participate in compared to what other couples do	.67	.67
4. compare how treat each other to how other couples treat	.64	.70
5. how communicate with each other compared to how well other couples communicate	.66	.60
6. compare how satisfied with my relationship to how satisfied others	.73	.73
7. compare how much time my partner and I spend to how much time other couples spend together	.67	.64
8. When feeling bad about relationship compare to other peoples' relationships.	.67	.63
9. When feeling good about relationship compare with other peoples' relationships.	.75	.67
10. think about how romantic my relationship is compared to how romantic other couples	.73	.68
11. compare my relationship with other couples relationships worse than mine	.68	.65
12. compare my relationship with other couples relationships better than mine.	.71	.67
13. how romantic my partner is in comparison to other peoples' partners.	.76	.60
14. compare things that my partner does for me to what other peoples' partners do for them.	.73	.71
15. think about how trustworthy my partner is in comparison	.70	.57
16. compare how supportive my partner is	.76	.70
17. think about how dependable my partner is	.76	.54
18. compare how attractive my partner is	.57	.48
19. think about how successful my partner is	.61	.57
20. compare how considerate my partner is	.68	.65
21. think about how often my partner and I argue	.59	.63
22. compare in a good mood.	.63	.64
23. compare in a bad mood.	.72	.72
24. enjoy listening to other people talk about their relationships.	.13	.30

Note. N = 270 (dating); 204 (married).

Table B3.

Principal Factor Analysis: Varimax Loadings for 2 Factor Solution

Relationship Social Comparison Measure Items	I (Dating)	I (Married)	II (Dating)	II (Married)
1. how happy in my relationship to how happy others are in their relationships	**.47**	**.72**	**.54**	.20
2. resolve problems compared to how well other couples solve their problems.	.26	**.58**	**.75**	.19
3. what types of activities my partner and I participate in compared to what other couples do	**.48**	**.65**	**.52**	.25
4. compare how treat each other to how other couples treat	.33	**.62**	**.74**	.33
5. how communicate with each other compared to how well other couples communicate	.36	**.66**	**.71**	.11
6. compare how satisfied with my relationship to how satisfied others	**.62**	**.77**	.39	.19
7. compare how much time my partner and I spend to how much time other couples spend together	**.63**	**.52**	.24	.38
8. When feeling bad about relationship compare to other peoples' relationships.	**.70**	**.67**	.11	.15
9. When feeling good about relationship compare with other peoples' relationships.	**.72**	**.58**	.24	.33
10. think about how romantic my relationship is compared to how romantic other couples	**.69**	**.61**	.26	.32
11. compare my relationship with other couples relationships worse than mine	**.70**	**.54**	.12	.38
12. compare my relationship with other couples relationships better than mine.	**.70**	**.76**	.20	.10
13. how romantic my partner is in comparison to other peoples' partners.	**.78**	**.42**	.16	**.44**
14. compare things that my partner does for me to what other peoples' partners do for them.	**.75**	**.47**	.15	**.55**
15. think about how trustworthy my partner is in comparison	**.67**	.13	.24	**.78**
16. compare how supportive my partner is	**.69**	.28	.31	**.81**
17. think about how dependable my partner is	**.67**	.02	.35	**.89**
18. compare how attractive my partner is	**.52**	.33	.23	.36
19. think about how successful my partner is	**.60**	.39	.18	**.43**
20. compare how considerate my partner is	**.63**	.29	.27	**.70**
21. think about how often my partner and I argue	**.43**	**.57**	**.43**	.30
22. compare in a good mood.	**.56**	**.49**	.28	**.41**
23. compare in a bad mood.	**.71**	**.67**	.19	.31
24. enjoy listening to other people talk about their relationships.	-.10	.30	**.45**	.09

Note. *N* = 270 (dating); 204 (married). Loadings .40 and above are highlighted.

Table B4.

Principal Factor Analysis: Varimax Loadings for 3 Factor Solution

Relationship Social Comparison Measure Items	I (Dating)	I (Married)	II (Dating)	II (Married)	III (Dating)	III (Married)
1. how happy in my relationship to how happy others are in their relationships	.23	**.54**	.38	.13	**.61**	**.50**
2. resolve problems compared to how well other couples solve their problems.	.13	**.66**	.17	.12	**.78**	.13
3. what types of activities my partner and I participate in compared to what other couples do	.39	**.58**	.23	.19	**.54**	.34
4. compare how treat each other to how other couples treat	.21	**.74**	.18	.26	**.77**	.12
5. how communicate with each other compared to how well other couples communicate	.29	**.80**	.15	.02	**.72**	.08
6. compare how satisfied with my relationship to how satisfied others	.35	**.61**	**.49**	.13	**.46**	**.49**
7. compare how much time my partner and I spend to how much time other couples spend together	.31	**.51**	**.56**	.32	.32	.25
8. When feeling bad about relationship compare to other peoples' relationships.	.24	.22	**.73**	.12	.23	**.81**
9. When feeling good about relationship compare with other peoples' relationships.	.39	**.60**	**.59**	.27	.33	.23
10. think about how romantic my relationship is compared to how romantic other couples	**.47**	**.50**	**.48**	.27	.32	.39
11. compare my relationship with other couples relationships worse than mine	.38	**.59**	**.60**	.32	.20	.17
12. compare my relationship with other couples relationships better than mine.	.29	.38	**.68**	.05	.30	**.74**
13. how romantic my partner is in comparison to other peoples' partners.	**.62**	.24	**.47**	.41	.20	**.43**
14. compare things that my partner does for me to what other peoples' partners do for them.	**.70**	.38	.36	**.51**	.15	.36
15. think about how trustworthy my partner is in comparison	**.65**	.18	.28	**.77**	.23	.09
16. compare how supportive my partner is	**.71**	.29	.24	**.79**	.30	.19
17. think about how dependable my partner is	**.72**	.08	.21	**.88**	.33	.06
18. compare how attractive my partner is	**.57**	.20	.15	.33	.20	.32
19. think about how successful my partner is	**.73**	.19	.11	**.41**	.13	**.44**
20. compare how considerate my partner is	**.68**	.30	.19	**.67**	.25	.18
21. think about how often my partner and I argue	**.49**	**.53**	.28	.24	.29	.28
22. compare in a good mood.	.29	**.58**	.28	.35	**.47**	.12
23. compare in a bad mood.	**.43**	.36	**.55**	.26	.26	**.66**
24. enjoy listening to other people talk about their relationships.	.30	-.01	**-.46**	.08	.34	**.50**

Note. N = 270(dating); 204 (married). Loadings .40 and above are highlighted.

Table B5.

Principal Factor Analysis: RSCM and RCT Loadings on the First Unrotated Factor

RSCM & RCT Items	Dating	Married
RSCM1-*compare how happy*	.64	.67
RSCM2-*how resolve problems*	.55	.54
RSCM3-*types of activities*	.64	.67
RSCM4-*how treat each other*	.62	.67
RSCM5-*how well communicate*	.61	.58
RSCM6-*how satisfied*	.67	.73
RSCM7-*how much time spent*	.58	.58
RSCM8-*when feeling bad compare*	.64	.64
RSCM9-*when feeling good compare*	.70	.61
RSCM10-*how romantic relationship is*	.68	.65
RSCM11-*compare to worse than mine*	.65	.66
RSCM12-*compare to better than mine*	.73	.69
RSCM13-*how romantic partner is*	.75	.55
RSCM14-*compare what partner does*	.72	.65
RSCM15-*how trustworthy partner is*	.67	.52
RSCM16-*how supportive partner is*	.72	.64
RSCM17-*how dependable partner is*	.72	.47
RSCM18-*how attractive partner is*	.56	.48
RSCM19-*how successful partner is*	.56	.56
RSCM20-*how considerate partner is*	.68	.59
RSCM21-*how often argue*	.59	.61
RSCM22-*compare in good mood*	.65	.61
RSCM23-*compare in bad mood*	.71	.75
RSCM24-*enjoy listening to talk about relationships*	.21	.29
RCT 1-*happy when compare to better than mine*	.20	.16
RCT2-*bad when compare to better than mine*	.63	.60
RCT3-*good when compare to worse than mine*	.46	.49
RCT4-*sad when compare to worse than mine*	.23	.30
RCT5-*enjoy comparing*	.62	.58
RCT6-*comparing unpleasant*	.04	.15
RCT7-*makes me feel better about relationship*	.40	.37
RCT8-*makes me see problems in relationship*	.58	.52
RCT9-*helps me see positive aspects of relationship*	.36	.27
RCT10-*makes me more optimistic about relationship*	.37	.25
RCT11-*happy couple makes feel happy*	-.04	.05
RCT12-*happy couple makes distressed*	.55	.50
RCT13-*unhappy couple makes feel good*	.35	.28
RCT14-*unhappy couple makes depressed*	.45	.45
RCT15-*focus on relationships happier than mine*	.52	.51
RCT16-*think about relationships worse off than mine*	.49	.46
RCT17-*avoid thinking about relationships better off*	.35	.27
RCT18-*compare to working really well*	.42	.40
RCT19-*looking at couples with lots of problems*	.36	.37
RCT20-*learn from well functioning*	.49	.24
RCT21-*compare to other peoples' relationships*	.75	.79
RCT22-*think about relationship in comparison to others*	.75	.79
RCT23-*helpful to think about comparison relationships*	.75	.71
RCT24-*compare how my partner is in our relationship to others' partners*	.73	.76

Note. *N* = 270(dating), 204 (married). RCT= Relationship Comparison Tendencies items. RSCM=Relationship Social Comparison Measure. Source: RSCM items from Smith LeBeau, L. & Buckingham, J. (2008). Relationship social comparison tendencies, insecurity, & perceived relationship quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *25*, 71-86.

Table B6.
Principal Factor Analysis: Varimax Rotation 2 Factor Solution

RSCM & RCT Items	I (Dating)	I (Married)	II (Dating)	II (Married)
RSCM1-*compare how happy*	**.66**	**.66**	.11	.18
RSCM2-*how resolve problems*	**.54**	.39	.16	**.40**
RSCM3-*types of activities*	**.60**	**.56**	.22	.36
RSCM4-*how treat each other*	**.56**	**.57**	.26	.35
RSCM5-*how well communicate*	**.63**	**.43**	.23	**.44**
RSCM6-*how satisfied*	**.69**	**.66**	.10	.29
RSCM7-*how much time spent*	**.61**	**.55**	.09	.19
RSCM8-*when feeling bad compare*	**.68**	**.66**	.04	.14
RSCM9-*when feeling good compare*	**.69**	**.51**	.16	.37
RSCM10-*how romantic relationship is*	**.68**	**.60**	.13	.25
RSCM11-*compare to worse than mine*	**.62**	**.51**	.21	**.42**
RSCM12-*compare to better than mine*	**.77**	**.75**	.05	.06
RSCM13-*how romantic partner is*	**.76**	**.59**	.13	.05
RSCM14-*compare what partner does*	**.71**	**.72**	.20	.03
RSCM15-*how trustworthy partner is*	**.63**	**.49**	.23	.17
RSCM16-*how supportive partner is*	**.68**	**.62**	.23	.18
RSCM17-*how dependable partner is*	**.67**	**.46**	.27	.12
RSCM18-*how attractive partner is*	**.48**	.37	.28	.30
RSCM19-*how successful partner is*	**.53**	**.52**	.23	.22
RSCM20-*how considerate partner is*	**.61**	**.54**	.30	.23
RSCM21-*how often argue*	**.56**	**.54**	.26	.27
RSCM22-*compare in good mood*	**.55**	**.49**	.36	.38
RSCM23-*compare in bad mood*	**.74**	**.74**	.09	.21
RSCM24-*enjoy listening to talk about relationships*	.05	.22	.39	.22
RCT 1-*happy when compare to better than mine*	.04	-.05	**.42**	**.41**
RCT2-*bad when compare to better than mine*	**.66**	**.72**	.05	.03
RCT3-*good when compare to worse than mine*	.30	**.51**	**.51**	**.56**
RCT4-*sad when compare to worse than mine*	**.50**	.22	.00	.23
RCT5-*enjoy comparing*	**.43**	.37	**.55**	**.55**
RCT6-*comparing unpleasant*	.20	.31	-.33	-.25
RCT7-*makes me feel better about relationship*	.17	-.30	**.61**	**.60**
RCT8-*makes me see problems in relationship*	**.59**	**.54**	.06	.27
RCT9-*helps me see positive aspects of relationship*	.11	-.05	**.62**	**.66**
RCT10-*makes me more optimistic about relationship*	.12	-.11	**.63**	**.72**
RCT11-*happy couple makes feel happy*	-.32	-.30	**.61**	**.60**
RCT12-*happy couple makes distressed*	**.66**	**.69**	-.13	-.24
RCT13-*unhappy couple makes feel good*	.30	-.01	**.51**	**.58**
RCT14-*unhappy couple makes depressed*	.17	**.57**	.15	-.10
RCT15-*focus on relationships happier than mine*	**.56**	**.62**	.01	-.09
RCT16-*think about relationships worse off than mine*	.36	.24	.39	**.54**
RCT17-*avoid thinking about relationships better off*	.35	.39	.08	-.13
RCT18-*compare to working really well*	.18	.24	**.63**	**.42**
RCT19-*looking at couples with lots of problems*	.14	.16	**.56**	**.49**
RCT20-*learn from well functioning*	.26	.16	**.53**	.22
RCT21-*compare to other peoples' relationships*	**.64**	**.65**	**.41**	**.46**
RCT22-*think about relationship in comparison to others*	**.65**	**.67**	.39	**.41**
RCT23-*helpful to think about comparison relationships*	**.60**	**.51**	**.49**	**.56**
RCT24-*compare how my partner is in our relationship to others' partners*	**.64**	**.67**	.36	.36

Note. *N* = 270(dating), 204 (married). Loadings .40 and above are highlighted. RCT= Relationship Comparison Tendencies items. RSCM=Relationship Social Comparison Measure. Source: RSCM items from Smith LeBeau, L. & Buckingham, J. (2008). Relationship social comparison tendencies, insecurity, & perceived relationship quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 25,* 71-8.

Table B7.
Principal Factor Analysis: Varimax Rotation 3 Factor Solution

RSCM & RCT Items	I (Dating)	I (Married)	II (Dating)	III (Married)	III (Dating)	II (Married)
RSCM1-*compare how happy*	**.68**	**.42**	.06	.15	.17	**.53**
RSCM2-*how resolve problems*	**.63**	.39	.11	.35	.04	.22
RSCM3-*types of activities*	**.67**	**.42**	.16	31	.08	**.42**
RSCM4-*how treat each other+*	**.66**	**.55**	.20	.26	.03	.31
RSCM5-*how well communicate*	**.71**	.38	.15	.39	-.02	.28
RSCM6-*how satisfied*	**.69**	**.45**	.06	.25	.21	**.51**
RSCM7-*how much time spent +*	**.67**	**.57**	.04	.10	.10	.27
RSCM8-*when feeling bad compare*	**.56**	**.42**	.04	.19	.39	**.63**
RSCM9-*when feeling good compare+*	**.67**	**.59**	.13	.27	.25	.21
RSCM10-*how romantic relationship is*	**.71**	**.47**	.09	.19	.18	**.42**
RSCM11-*compare to worse than mine+*	**.57**	**.59**	.19	.32	.28	.22
RSCM12-*compare to better than mine*	**.61**	.27	.06	.08	**.49**	**.76**
RSCM13-*how romantic partner is+*	**.68**	**.50**	.11	-.02	.32	.36
RSCM14-*compare what partner does+*	**.66**	**.64**	.17	-.07	.28	**.41**
RSCM15-*how trustworthy partner is+*	**.62**	**.70**	.20	.02	.22	.07
RSCM16-*how supportive partner is+*	**.71**	**.79**	.19	.02	.17	.16
RSCM17-*how dependable partner is+*	**.72**	**.75**	.22	-.05	.14	-.01
RSCM18-*how attractive partner is*	**.45**	.39	.26	.24	.18	.20
RSCM19-*how successful partner is +*	**.52**	**.48**	.21	.14	.19	.30
RSCM20-*how considerate partner is+*	**.58**	**.70**	.28	.09	.22	.15
RSCM21-*how often argue*	**.44**	**.45**	.18	.21	.35	.36
RSCM22-*compare in good mood+*	**.47**	**.60**	.36	.27	.29	.17
RSCM23-*compare in bad mood*	**.42**	**.58**	**.63**	.22	.19	.28
RSCM24-*enjoy listening to talk about relationships*	.15	.10	.18	-.06	.21	.38
RCT 1-*happy when compare to better than mine#*	.03	-.03	**.41**	**.43**	.02	.00
RCT2-*bad when compare to better than mine**	.38	.29	.11	-.08	**.62**	**.69**
RCT3-*good when compare to worse than mine #*	.25	.27	**.51**	**.53**	.17	.16
RCT4-*sad when compare to worse than mine*	.12	.13	.16	.22	.13	.20
RCT5-*enjoy comparing#*	.36	.28	**.56**	**.52**	.23	.30
RCT6-*comparing unpleasant*	.00	.04	-.28	-.23	.34	.34
RCT7-*makes me feel better about relationship#*	.21	.34	**.59**	**.56**	-.00	-.13
RCT8-*makes me see problems in relationship**	.35	.07	.10	.16	**.54**	**.65**
RCT9-*helps me see positive aspects of relationship#*	.29	.11	**.57**	**.64**	-.22	-.10
RCT10-*makes me more optimistic about relationship#*	.27	.06	**.58**	**.72**	-.17	-.12
RCT11-*happy couple makes feel happy #*	-.14	-.05	**.58**	**.61**	-.37	-.25
RCT12-*happy couple makes distressed**	.26	.28	-.04	-.24	**.78**	**.64**
RCT13-*unhappy couple makes feel good#*	.03	.12	**.49**	**.57**	.28	-.05
RCT14-*unhappy couple makes depressed**	.15	.29	.08	-.12	**.66**	**.48**
RCT15-*focus on relationships happier than mine**	.31	.10	.06	-.04	**.53**	**.71**
RCT16-*think about relationships worse off than mine*	.20	.31	**.43**	**.49**	.36	.10
RCT17-*avoid thinking about relationships better off **	.09	.16	.14	-.15	**.49**	.36
RCT18-*compare to working really well*	.10	-.07	**.66**	**.48**	.16	**.40**
RCT19-*looking at couples with lots of problems#*	.02	.05	**.60**	**.52**	.21	.21
RCT20-*learn from well functioning*	.13	-.14	**.57**	.30	.28	.34
RCT21-*compare to other peoples' relationships*	**.46**	.32	**.44**	**.46**	**.46**	**.62**
RCT22-*think about relationship in comparison to others*	**.49**	.31	**.43**	**.42**	**.41**	**.65**
RCT23-*helpful to think about comparison relationships*	**.43**	.29	**.52**	**.56**	**.44**	**.47**
RCT24-*compare how my partner is in our relationship to others' partners*	**.49**	**.40**	.38	.34	**.42**	**.57**

Note. *N* = 270(dating); 204 (married). Loadings .40 and above are highlighted. RCT= Relationship Comparison Tendencies items. RSCM=Relationship Social Comparison Measure. (+)=Relational Comparisons scale; (#) =Positive Affect Relational

Comparisons scale; (*) = Negative Affect Relational Comparisons scales. Source: RSCM items from Smith LeBeau, L. & Buckingham, J. (2008). Relationship social comparison tendencies, insecurity, & perceived relationship quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *25*, 71-86.

Table B8.
Correlations between scores from Dating and Married factor solution coefficients in items from the Dating (*n*= 270) *Sample*

Factor scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. RC(dating)	--					
2. PARC(dating)	.24	--				
3. NARC(dating)	.46	.14	--			
4. RC (married)	**.89**	.22	.44	--		
5. PARC (married)	.24	**.90**	.15	.17	---	
6. NARC (married)	.27	.09	**.82**	.30	.10	--

Note. Convergent correlations are highlighted. RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons.

Table B9.
Correlations between scores from Dating and Married factor solution coefficients in items from the Married (n=204) Samples

Factor scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. RC(dating)	--					
2. PARC(dating)	.15	--				
3. NARC(dating)	.32	.04	--			
4. RC (married)	**.91**	.15	.30	--		
5. PARC (married)	.15	**.90**	.03	.22	---	
6. NARC (married)	.35	.02	**.88**	.40	.14	--

Note. Convergent correlations are highlighted. RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons.

Table B10.
Principal Factor Analysis: RCT Spouses Loadings on the First Unrotated Factor

Relationship Comparison Tendencies Spouse Items	Loading
8. Compare our relationship to others' relationships that are better than ours.	.79
6. Compare how happy we are in our relationship to how happy others are in their relationships.	.74
1. frequently compare to others	.74
2. compare how well doing in life to others	.73
3. frustrated to see some people succeed so easily	.68
10. Appear sad after comparing our relationship to those marriages that are happier than ours.	.68
12. Seem upset about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are better off than ours.	.67
5. envious or inferior to others	.66
7. compare our marriage to relationships that are worse off than ours.	.65
9. Feel happy about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are worse than ours.	.60
4. troubled by feelings of inadequacy	.59
11. Feel good about our marriage after comparing it to other people's marriages that are happier than ours.	.47

Note. $N = 143$.

Table B11.
Principal Factor Analysis: RCT Spouses 2 Factor Solution

Relationship Comparison Tendencies Spouse Items	I	II
5. envious or inferior to others	**.86**	.03
4. troubled by feelings of inadequacy	**.77**	.03
3. frustrated to see some people succeed so easily	**.74**	.20
2. compare how doing in life to others	**.73**	.28
1. frequently compare to others	**.64**	.39
10. Appear sad after comparing our relationship to those marriages that are happier than ours.	**.54**	**.41**
12. Seem upset about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are better off than ours.	**.50**	**.44**
7. compare our marriage to worse off than ours	.13	**.83**
6. Compare how happy we are in our relationship to how happy others are in their relationships.	.29	**.80**
9. Feel happy about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are worse than ours.	.10	**.79**
8. Compare our relationship to others' relationships that are better than ours.	.50	**.62**
11. Feel good about our marriage after comparing it to other people's marriages that are happier than ours.	.10	**.60**

Note. N = 143. Loadings .40 and above are highlighted.

Table B12.
Principal Factor Analysis: RCT Spouses 3 Factor Solution

Relationship Comparison Tendencies Spouse Items	I	II	III
5. envious or inferior to others+	**.83**	.24	-.01
4. troubled by feelings of inadequacy+	**.78**	.14	.04
2. compare how doing in life to others +	**.75**	.18	.30
3. frustrated to see some people succeed so easily+	**.73**	.20	.19
1. frequently compare to others+	**.65**	.19	**.41**
12. Seem upset about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are better off than ours.*	.23	**.85**	.08
10. Appear sad after comparing our relationship to those marriages that are happier than ours.*	.28	**.83**	.07
8. Compare our relationship to others' relationships that are better than ours.*	.28	**.77**	.34
9. Feel happy about our relationship after comparing it to others' relationships that are worse than ours.#	.14	.12	**.84**
11. Feel good about our marriage after comparing it to other people's marriages that are happier than ours.#	.20	-.07	**.73**
6. Compare how happy we are in our relationship to how happy others are in their relationships.#	.21	**.43**	**.70**
7. compare our marriage to worse off than ours.#	.01	**.49**	**.69**

Note. *N* = 143. Loadings .40 and above are highlighted. (+)=Relationship Comparisons Tendencies Envy scale; (#) =Relationship Comparison Tendencies Positive Affect (spouses) scale; (*) = Relationship Comparison Tendencies Negative Affect (spouses) scales.

Table B13.
Principal Factor Analysis: SCO 2 Factor Solution

Social Comparison Orientation Items	I (Dating)	II (Married)	II (Spouses)	II (Dating)	I (Married)	I (Spouses)
1. often compare how my loved ones*	.07	.16	-.12	**.52**	**.56**	**.76**
2. how I do things compared with how others do things*	.22	.09	.03	**.70**	**.74**	**.81**
3. to find out how well I've done something, compare with others*	.24	.15	.13	**.69**	**.73**	**.80**
4. often compare how I am socially with other people*	.11	.06	.25	**.71**	**.79**	**.73**
5. not the type of person who compares*	-.18	.10	.07	**.69**	**.83**	**.80**
6. often compare what I have accomplished in life*	.39	-.02	-.06	**.57**	**.72**	**.78**
7. often like to talk about mutual experiences and opinions+	**.78**	**.71**	**.57**	.06	.05	.05
8. try to find out what others think who face similar problems +	**.85**	**.86**	**.83**	.07	.08	.08
9. like to know what others in a similar situation would do+	**.79**	**.83**	**.83**	.18	.16	.20
10. try to find out what others think about it+	**.73**	**.74**	**.85**	.07	.15	.08
11. never consider my situation relative to that of other people	.26	.16	.14	.19	**.55**	**.41**

Note. *N* = 270(dating); 204 (married); 143 (spouses). Loadings .40 and above are highlighted. SCO= Social Comparison Orientation Scale (+) = SCO Opinions scale; (*) = SCO Abilities scales. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76,* 129–142.

Table B14.
Correlations between scores from Dating, Married and Spouses factor solution coefficients for SCO items from the Dating (n=270) Sample

Factor scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SCO_Abil (dating)	---					
2. SCO_Opin (dating)	.26	----				
3. SCO_Abil (married)	**.97**	.21	----			
4. SCO_Opin (married)	.12	**.98**	.19	----		
5. SCO_Abil (spouses)	**.95**	.14	**.98**	.11	---	
6. SCO_Opin (spouses)	.15	**.98**	.13	**.98**	.17	---

Note. Convergent correlations are highlighted. SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities scale. SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142.

Table B15.
Correlations between scores from Dating, Married and Spouses factor solution coefficients for SCO items from the Married (n=204) Sample

Factor scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SCO_Abil (dating)	---					
2. SCO_Opin (dating)	.24	----				
3. SCO_Abil (married)	**.98**	.12	----			
4. SCO_Opin (married)	.15	**.99**	.24	----		
5. SCO_Abil (spouses)	**.97**	.10	**.99**	.17	---	
6. SCO_Opin (spouses)	.12	**.98**	.19	**.99**	.19	---

Note. Convergent correlations are highlighted. SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities scale. SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142.

Table B16.
Correlations between scores from Dating, Married and Spouses factor solution coefficients for SCO items from the Spouses (n=143) Sample

Factor scores	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SCO_Abil (dating)	---					
2. SCO_Opin (dating)	.20	----				
3. SCO_Abil (married)	**.97**	.15	----			
4. SCO_Opin (married)	.12	**.98**	.22	----		
5. SCO_Abil (spouses)	**.97**	.13	**.99**	.13	---	
6. SCO_Opin (spouses)	.12	**.98**	.12	**.99**	.24	---

Note. Convergent correlations are highlighted. SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities scale. SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142.

Table B17.
Means and Standard Deviations for Marital and Relationship Satisfaction

	Dating	Married		
Scale	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD)*	*t*	*d*
1. KMS	16.68 (*4.03*)	17.13 (*3.83*)	1.24	0.11
2. QMI	30.54 (*5.08*)	32.11 (*5.03*)	3.31**	**0.30**
3. Satisfaction	0.10 (*7.63*)	-0.03 (*8.13*)	0.18	0.02

Note. $N = 270$ (dating), $N = 204$ (married). **$p < .01$, 2-tailed. Effect sizes .30 and above are highlighted. KMS= Kansas Marital Satisfaction. QMI= Quality of Marriage Index. Source: KMS items from Schumm, W., Nichols, C., Schectman, K., & Grisby, C. (1983). Characteristics of responses to the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale by a sample of 84 married mothers. *Psychological Reports, 53,* 567-572. QMI items from Norton, R. (1983). Measuring marital quality: A critical look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45,* 141-151.

Table B18.
Means and Standard Deviations for Relationship Uncertainty and Self Uncertainty Subscales

	Dating	Married		
Subscale	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD)*	*t*	*d*
1. RUS_beh	7.82 (*3.51)*	6.73 (*2.44)*	-3.79**	**-0.35**
2. RUS_mut	8.24 (*4.10*)	7.15 (*3.36*)	-3.09**	-0.28
3. RUS_def	8.00(*3.98*)	6.78(*2.97*)	-3.68**	**-0.34**
4. RUS_fut	10.34 (*4.67*)	6.66 (*3.67*)	-9.23**	**-0.85**
5. SUS_desire	13.42 (*6.57*)	10.31 (*5.27*)	-5.53**	**-0.51**
6. SUS_eval	7.26 (*3.61*)	5.96 (*3.27*)	-3.90**	**-0.36**
7. SUS	20.63 (*9.99*)	16.27 (*8.34*)	5.04**	**0.46**
8. RUS_Mut-Def	16.24 (*7.74*)	13.93 (*6.03*)	3.51**	**0.32**

Note. N = 270 (dating), N = 204 (married). ** p< .01, 2-tailed. Effect sizes .30 and above are highlighted. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_mut=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality; RUS_def= Relationship Uncertainty Definition; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; RUS_Mut-Def= Relationship Uncertainty combined mutuality & definition; SUS_desire= Self Uncertainty Desire; SUS_eval= Self Uncertainty Evaluation; SUS= Self Uncertainty composite (desire & evaluation). Source: RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies*, *50*, 261-278.

Table B19.
Inter-Correlations among Relationship Uncertainty and Self Uncertainty and Satisfaction in Dating and Married Samples

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. RUS_beh	--	.56	.53	.43	.33	.32	-.40
2. RUS_mut	.68	--	.79	.72	.61	.61	-.64
3. RUS_def	.64	.84	---	.59	.58	.55	-.65
4. RUS_fut	.45	.70	.68	---	.77	.74	-.74
5. SUS_desire	.47	.55	.59	.68	---	.90	-.76
6. SUS_eval	.43	.50	.58	.65	.92	---	-.75
7. Satisfaction	-.49	-.60	-,60	-.62	-.68	-.64	--

Note. Dating (*n*= 270) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 204) are above the diagonal. All correlations are significant $p < .01$, 2-tailed. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_mut=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality; RUS_def= Relationship Uncertainty Definition; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS_desire= Self Uncertainty Desire; SUS_eval= Self Uncertainty Evaluation. Satisfaction= combined standardized KMS/QMI score. Source: RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies, 50*, 261-278.

Table B20.
Inter-Correlations among Combined Relationship Uncertainty and Self Uncertainty and Satisfaction in Dating and Married Samples

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5
1. RUS_beh	---	.43	.57	.33	-.40
2. RUS_fut	.47	---	.70	.78	-.74
3. RUS_Mut-Def	.69	.72	---	.64	-.70
4. SUS	.46	.68	.60	---	-.79
5. Satisfaction	-.49	-.62	-.65	-.72	---

Note. Dating (*n*= 270) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 204) are above the diagonal. All correlations are significant $p < .01$, 2-tailed. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; RUS_Mut-Def= Relationship Uncertainty combined mutuality & definition; SUS= Self Uncertainty composite (desire & evaluation). Satisfaction= combined standardized KMS/QMI score. Source: RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies, 50*, 261-278.

Table B21.
Means and Standard Deviations for Relational Comparison and General Comparison Factor Scales

	Dating	Married		
Factor Scale	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD)*	*T*	*d*
1. RC	17.42 (*7.66)*	16.19 (*6.68)*	-1.82+	-0.17
2. PARC	14.67 (*4.52*)	15.05 (*5.14)*	0.83	0.08
3. NARC	8.61 (*4.07*)	7.14 (*3.87*)	-3.90**	**-0.36**
4. SCO_Abil	19.46 (*3.91*)	18.75 (*4.70*)	-1.79+	-0.16
5. SCO_Opin	15.23 (*2.76*)	15.22 (*2.74*)	-0.07	-.01

Note. N = 270 (dating), *N* = 203 (married). ***p*< .01, +*p*<.10, 2-tailed. Effect sizes .30 and above are highlighted. RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities. SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*, 129–142.

Table B22
Means and Standard Deviations for Big 5 Traits, Affectivity, Hostility and Envy

	Dating	Married		
Scale	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD)*	*t*	*d*
1. BFI_Neuroticism	22.37(*6.20*)	21.83(*6.56*)	-0.90	-0.08
2. BFI_Extraversion	28.17(*6.03*)	26.66(*6.78*)	-2.52*	-0.23
3. BFI_Openness	34.81(*5.61*)	36.74(*6.77*)	3.36**	**0.31**
4. BFI_Agreeableness	34.59(*6.06*)	34.84(*5.50*)	0.46	0.04
5.BFI_Conscientiousness	31.90(*5.73*)	35.45(*6.28*)	6.32**	**0.59**
6. PANAS_Negative Affect	20.38(*6.02*)	18.35(*5.59*)	-3.68**	**-0.34**
7. PANAS_Positive Affect	34.88(*6.18*)	34.74(*5.85*)	-0.25	-0.02
9. Ho	22.04(8.59)	16.06(7.21)	-7.67**	**-0.71**
10. AQ_Ho	21.54(6.62)	16.73(5.46)	-8.36**	**-0.78**
11. DES	18.31(7.12)	13.72(6.00)	-7.38**	**-0.69**
12. Hostility	-1.12 (*22.35*)	-0.47 (*19.77*)	-0.32	0.03

Note. N = 262 (dating), N = 202 (married). *p< .05. **p< .01, 2-tailed. Effect sizes .30 and above are highlighted. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; Hostility = Cook-Medley Hostility (Ho) and AQ_Ho= Aggression Questionnaire Hostility combined standardized scores; DES= Dispositional Envy. Source: BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070. Hostility items AQ and Ho from Buss, A., & Perry, M. (1992). The Aggression Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 452-459. Cook, W. & Medley, D. (1954). Proposed hostility and pharasic-virtue scales for the MMPI. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *38*, 414-418. DES items from Smith, R., Parrott, W., Diener, E., Hoyle, R., & Kim, S. (1999). Dispositional Envy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 1005-1020.

Table B23.

Inter-correlations between Big 5 Traits, Relational Comparison Tendencies, General Social Comparison Orientation Factor Scales and Satisfaction in Dating and Married Samples

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. BFI_Neuroticism	---	**-.21****	-.04	**-.43****	**-.29****	**.32****	.09	**.38****	**.35****	-.04	**-.25****
2. BFI_Extraversion	**-.23***	---	.17*	.09	.13	-.04	.10	-.10	-.09	.10	.04
3. BFI_Openness	-.13*	**.23****	**---**	-.07	-.12	**.21****	-.01	-.11	-.12	-.13	.15*
4. BFI_Agreeableness	**-.42****	**.26****	.14*	---	**.24****	-.10	-.07	-.15*	-.14	.09	.12
5.BFI_Conscientiousness	**-.29****	.17*	.03	**.46****	---	-.02	.03	-.09	-.14*	-.01	.00
6. RC	**.26****	-.04	-.13*	-.17**	-.09	---	**.28****	**.57****	**.41****	**.24****	**-.29****
7. PARC	-.02	-.01	-.06	.07	.10	**.44****	---	**.14***	**.27****	**.25****	.17**
8. NARC	**.27****	-.14*	-.08	**-.22****	-.11	**.63****	.28**	**---**	**.35****	**.21****	**-.58****
9. SCO_Abil	**.25****	-.15*	.02	-.14*	-.10	**.45****	**.30****	**.38****	---	**.26****	-.03
10. SCO_Opin	.11	**.20****	**.20****	**.20****	.07	**.22****	.12	.15*	**.32****	---	-.10
11. Satisfaction	-.15*	.16	.07	**.31****	.16*	-.13*	**.21****	**-.46****	-.08	.16*	---

Note. Dating (*n*= 262) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 202) correlations are above the diagonal. **p*<.05, ***p* < .01, 2-tailed. Correlations .20 and above are highlighted. BFI= Big Five Inventory; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source: BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142.

Table B24.

Inter-correlations between Combined Hostility, Big 5 Traits, Affectivity, Envy and Satisfaction in Dating and Married Samples

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Hostility	---	**.53****	-.18*	-.13*	**-.44****	-.11	**.47****	-.28**	**.52****	-.12
2. BFI_Neuroticism	**.50****	---	-.21**	-.04	**-.43****	-.29**	**.65****	**-.44****	**.46****	-.25**
3. BFI_Extraversion	-.17*	-.23**	---	17*	.09	.13	-.16*	**.47****	-.26**	.04
4. BFI_Openness	-.13*	-.13*	.23**	---	-.07	-.12	.08	.23**	-.03	.15*
5. BFI_Agreeableness	**-.58****	**-.42****	.26**	.14*	---	.24**	**-.42****	.29**	-.20	.12
6.BFI_Conscientiousness	-.34**	-.29**	.17**	.03	**.46****	---	-.41**	**.44****	-.25**	.00
7. PANAS_Negative Affect	**.51****	**.61****	-.17**	-.11	**-.45****	**-.35****	---	-.36**	**.43****	-.16*
8. PANAS_Positive Affect	-.26**	-.36**	.37**	.12	.28**	**.51****	-.29**	---	**-.43****	.23*
9. DES	**.62****	**.51****	-.24**	-.17**	-.39**	-.34**	**.43****	-.32**	---	-.14*
10. Satisfaction	-.26**	-.15*	.16	.07	.31**	.16*	-.34**	.26**	-.24**	---

Note. Dating (n=262) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (n=202) correlations are above the diagonal. **p*< .05. ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. Correlations .40 and above are highlighted. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; Hostility = Cook-Medley Hostility (Ho) and AQ_Ho= Aggression Questionnaire Hostility combined standardized scores;DES= Dispositional Envy. Source: BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070. Hostility items AQ and Ho from Buss, A., & Perry, M. (1992). The Aggression Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 452-459. Cook, W. & Medley, D. (1954). Proposed hostility and pharasic-virtue scales for the MMPI. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *38*, 414-418. DES items from Smith, R., Parrott, W., Diener, E., Hoyle, R., & Kim, S. (1999). Dispositional Envy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 1005-1020.

Table B25.
Inter-Correlations between Neuroticism, Hostility, Uncertainty, Comparison Orientation and Satisfaction in the Dating and Married Samples

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.BFI_Neuroticism	---	**.61****	**.51****	**.26****	-.02	**.27****	**.25****	.11	.17**	.14*	.09	.02	-.15*
2.PANAS_Negative Affect	**.65****	---	**.52****	**.27****	-.00	**.38****	**.25****	.00	**.32****	**.26****	**.32****	**.26****	**-.34****
3.Hostility	**.54****	**.49****	---	**.35****	.06	**.40****	**.22****	-.00	**.31****	**.22****	**.21****	.19**	-.26**
4. RC	**.32****	.19**	**.27****	---	**.44****	**.63****	**.45****	**.22****	.16**	.16*	.19*	.08	**-.29****
5. PARC	-.09	-.03	.00	**.28****	--	**.28****	**.30****	.12	-.10	**-.23****	-.16**	**-.21****	.17**
6. NARC	**.38****	**.28****	**.22****	**.57****	.14*	---	**.38****	.15*	**.27****	**.35****	**.34****	**.31****	**-.58****
7. SCO_Abil	**.35****	**.32****	**.32****	**.41****	**.27****	**.35****	---	**.32****	.01	.15*	.03	.05	.05
8. SCO_Opin	-.04	-.01	.05	**.24****	**.25****	**.21****	**.26***	---	**-.21****	-.08	**-.20****	-.16**	.16**
9. RUS_beh	**.28****	**.33****	**.31****	.18*	-.17*	**.24****	.08	.06	---	**.47****	**.69****	**.46****	**-.49****
10. RUS_fut	**.24****	**.20****	**.21****	**.33****	-.15*	**.49****	.15*	.07	**.43****	---	**.72****	**.68****	**-.62****
11. RUS_Mut-Def	**.35****	**.33****	**.19****	.20**	-.24**	**.46****	.03	.04	**.57****	**.70****	---	**.60****	**-.65****
12. SUS	**.28****	**.20****	.16*	**.29****	-.18*	**.47****	.08	.09	**.33****	**.78****	**.64****	---	**-.72****
13. Satisfaction	**-.25****	**-.16***	-.12	-.13*	**.21****	**-.46****	-.03	-.09	**-.40****	**-.74****	**-.70****	**-.79****	---

Note. Dating (*n*= 262) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 203) correlations are above the diagonal. Correlations .20 and above are highlighted.**p* <.05, ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. . Source : BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*,

54, 1063-1070. SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies*, *50*, 261-278.

Table B26.
Convergent Correlations among Participant and Spouse Ratings on Relationship Comparison Tendencies and General Social Comparison Factor Scales and Envy

Factor Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Target Self-Ratings											
1. RC	---										
2. PARC	.31**	---									
3. NARC	.59**	.17*	---								
4. SCO_Abil	.37**	.29**	.29**	---							
5. SCO_Opin	.27**	.24**	.18*	.31**	---						
6. DES	.20*	-.10	.33**	.38**	.18*	---					
Spouse Ratings											
7. RCT_Envy	.22*	.07	.30**	.28**	-.07	**.27****	---				
8. RCT_PA	.15	**.05**	.11	.11	-.02	.06	.46**	---			
9. RCT_NA	.27**	-.05	**.36****	.23**	.13	.18*	.53**	.51**	---		
10. SCO_Abil	.26**	.09	.32**	**.28****	-.00	.20*	.78**	.54**	.61**	---	
11.SCO_Opin	.15	.12	.06	.08	**.22****	.04	.12	.22**	.15	.25**	--

Note. N = 143 (married), *N* = 143 (spouses). Convergent correlations are highlighted. **p*< .05. ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; RCT_PA= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Positive Affect (spouses); RCT_NA= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Negative Affect (spouses); RCT_Envy= Relationship Comparison Tendencies Envy (spouses); SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions; DES= Dispositional Envy. Source: SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76,* 129–142. DES items from Smith, R., Parrott, W., Diener, E., Hoyle, R., & Kim, S. (1999). Dispositional Envy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25,* 1005-1020.

Table B27.
Convergent Correlations between Participant and Spouse Rating of Big 5 and PANAS

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. BFI_Neuroticism	**.44****	-.06	.00	-.13	-.14
2. BFI_Extraversion	.14	**.70****	-.02	-.12	-.04
3. BFI_Openness	.06	.10	**.39****	-.13	-.13
4. BFI_Agreeableness	-.14	.11	-.03	**.37****	.11
5.BFI_Conscientiousness	.06	.04	-.24**	-.06	**.53****
6. PANAS_Negative Affect	.20*	-.05	.16	.01	-.13
7. PANAS_Positive Affect	-.08	.37**	.03	-.01	.18*

Note. N = 141 (married), N = 141 (spouses). *p<.05, **p<.01, 2-tailed. Convergent correlations are highlighted. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scale. Source: BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070.

Table B28.

Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparison Tendencies Factor Scale Scores from Relationship Uncertainty controlling for Satisfaction in the Dating Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors						
Satisfaction	.02	.12	**.04**	**.20****	**.19**	**.44****
Behavioral Uncertainty	.03	.17+	.04	.20	.20	.44
Satisfaction	.02	.12	.04	.20	**.19**	**.44****
Future Uncertainty	.03	.16+	**.06**	**.24***	.20	.45+
Satisfaction	.02	.15	**.04**	**.19***	**.22**	**.47****
Mutuality-Definition Uncertainty	**.04**	**.19***	.04	.19	.23	.48+

Note. N = 270. *p<.05, **p<.01. +p<.10, 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted.

Table B29.
Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparisons Factor Scale Scores from Relationship Uncertainty controlling for Satisfaction in the Married Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors						
Satisfaction	**.09**	**.29****	.03	.17+	**.33**	**.58****
Behavioral Uncertainty	.09	.30	.04	.20	.33	.58
Satisfaction	.09	.29	.03	.17	**.33**	**.58****
Future Uncertainty	**.11**	**.34***	.03	.18	.34	.59
Satisfaction	**.09**	**.30****	.04	.19	**.34**	**.58****
Mutuality-Definition Uncertainty	.09	.30	**.06**	**.24***	.34	.58

Note. N = 204. *p<.05, **p<.01, +p<.10, 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted.

Table B30.
Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparisons Factor Scale Scores from Self Uncertainty controlling for Satisfaction in the Dating and Married Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors/Sample						
Satisfaction (Dating)	.02	.12	.04	.20	**.19**	**.44****
Self Uncertainty (Dating)	.02	.12	.05	.23+	.19	.44
Satisfaction (Married)	.09	.29	.03	.17	**.33**	**.58****
Self Uncertainty (Married)	.10	.31	.04	.19	.33	.58

Note. N = 270 (dating) 204 (married). **p<.01, +p<.10, 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted.

Table B31.
Common Index Comparisons for Correlations between Satisfaction and Relational Comparison Tendencies Factor Scales vs. Satisfaction and General Social Comparison Factor Scales

	Satisfaction		
Comparison Factor Scales	*R*		*z*
1. RC vs. SCO Abil (Dating)	-.13	-.06	1.10
2. PARC vs. SCO Abil (Dating)	.21	-.06	**2.11***
3. NARC vs. SCO Abil (Dating)	-.46	-.06	**6.63****
4. RC vs. SCO Opin (Dating)	-.13	.17	-0.53
5. PARC vs. SCO Opin (Dating)	.21	.17	0.51
6. NARC vs. SCO Opin (Dating)	-.46	.17	**4.04****
7. RC vs. SCO Abil (Married)	-.29	-.03	**3.56****
8. PARC vs. SCO Abil (Married)	.17	-.03	1.67
9. NARC vs. SCO Abil (Married)	-.58	-.03	**8.52****
10. RC vs. SCO Opin (Married)	-.29	-.09	**2.39***
11. PARC vs. SCO Opin (Married)	.17	-.09	0.94
12. NARC vs. SCO Opin (Married)	-.58	-.09	**6.64****

Note. $N = 270$ (dating), $N = 203$ (married). *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, 2-tailed. Significant comparisons are highlighted. RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*, 129–142.

Table B32.
Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparison Tendencies Factor Scale Scores controlling for Relationship Uncertainty in the Dating Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors						
Behavioral Uncertainty						
Future Uncertainty	.05	.22+	**.05**	**.22***	.14	.38
Mutuality-Definition Uncertainty						
Satisfaction	.05	.22	.06	.25+	**.21**	**.46****

Note. N = 270. *p<.05, **p<.01, +p<.10 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted

Table B33.
Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparison Tendencies Factor Scale Scores controlling for Relationship Uncertainty in the Maried Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors						
Behavioral Uncertainty						
Future Uncertainty						
Mutuality-Definition	**.11**	**.34***	**.06**	**.25***	.27	.52
Uncertainty						
Satisfaction	.12	.35	.06	.25	**.35**	**.59****

Note. N = 204. *p<.05, **p<.01, 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted

Table B34.
Regression Analyses Predicting Relational Comparisons Factor Scale Scores controlling for Self Uncertainty the Dating and Married Sample

	Relational Comparisons		Positive Affect Relational Comparisons		Negative Affect Relational Comparisons	
	R^2	R	R^2	R	R^2	R
Predictors/Sample						
Self Uncertainty (Dating)	.01	.07	.04	.20	.10	.32
Satisfaction (Dating)	.02	.14+	.05	.22	**.22**	**.46****
Self Uncertainty (Married)	.09	.29	.03	.18	.22	.47
Satisfaction (Married)	.10	.31	.04	.19	**.34**	**.58****

Note. N = 270 (dating) 204 (married). **p<.01, +p<.10, 2-tailed. Significant models are highlighted.

Table B35.
Correlations Between Demographic and Target Variables in the Married (n= 203) Sample

	AGE	LENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP	GENDER
BFI_Neuroticism	-.08	-.09	.01
BFI_Extraversion	.08	.10	.14
BFI_Openness	.05	.02	**-.15***
BFI_Agreeableness	**.17***	**.15***	**.14***
BFI_Conscientiousness	.09	**.14***	**.32****
PANAS_Negative Affect	**-.20****	**-.15***	-.11
Hostility	-.05	-.11	-.08
RUS_beh	.03	-.10	**-.15***
RUS_fut	.11	-.01	.05
RUS_Mut-Def	.12	.02	-.05
SUS	.11	.02	.08
RC	-.03	-.03	**.18***
PARC	**-.18***	.05	.05
NARC	-.03	-.01	.14
SCO_Abil	**-.24****	**-.20***	.07
SCO_Opin	-.01	-.02	**.24****
Satisfaction	**-.18****	-.05	-.06

Note. Significant correlations are highlighted. *p <.05, **p< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and

Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. . Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *76*, 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies*, *50*, 261-278. BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070.

Table B36.
Correlations Between Demographic and Target Variables in the Dating (n=270) Sample

	LENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP	GENDER
BFI_Neuroticism	-.01	**.18****
BFI_Extraversion	**.13***	**.24****
BFI_Openness	.01	.11
BFI_Agreeableness	.09	**.24****
BFI_Conscientiousness	.05	**.14***
PANAS_Negative Affect	-.10	.03
Hostility	-.04	-.10
RUS_beh	-.07	**-.15***
RUS_fut	-.10	**-.14***
RUS_Mut-Def	**-.15***	**-.27****
SUS	-.10	**-.23****
RC	-.04	.10
PARC	-.01	.11
NARC	-.07	-.04
SCO_Abil	-.06	.03
SCO_Opin	-.08	**.27****
Satisfaction	**.13***	**.21****

Note. Significant correlations are highlighted. *p <.05, **p< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies, 50*, 261-278. BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Personality and Social Research. PANAS items from Watson, D., Clark, L. & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070.

Table B37.

Partial-Correlations between Neuroticism, Hostility, Uncertainty and Comparison Orientation, Satisfaction in the Dating and Married Samples controlling for Length of Relationship

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.BFI_Neuroticism	---	**.65****	**.51****	**.25****	**.22****	**.34****	**.27****	**.31****	**-.08**	**.38****	**.34****	**-.03**	**-.25****
2.PANAS_Negative Affect	**.67****	---	**.45****	**.27****	**.17****	**.30****	**.20****	**.21****	**-.03**	**.30****	**.30****	**-.04**	**-.15***
3.Hostility	**.50****	**.48****	---	**.25****	**.17***	**.16***	**.12**	**.22****	**.04**	**.20****	**.30****	**.07**	**-.12**
4. RUS_beh	**.23****	**.29****	**.31****	---	.38**	.54**	.33**	.17*	-.16*	.22**	.03	.05	-.39**
5. RUS_fut	**.19***	**.26****	**.22****	.44**	---	.68**	.79**	.33**	-.15*	.47**	.13	.05	-.74**
6. RUS_Mut-Def	**.16***	**.32****	**.20****	.66**	.69**	--	.64**	.19*	-.23**	.44**	-.00	.02	-.68**
7. SUS	**.07**	**.23****	**.13**	.39**	.66**	.54**	---	.28**	-.17*	.45**	.07	.08	-.78**
8. RC	**.27****	**.26****	**.37****	.24**	.18*	.26**	.05	---	.30**	.56**	.40**	**.27****	**-.29****
9. PARC	**-.05**	**-.04**	**.05**	.00	-.18*	-.08	-.19*	.44**	---	.16*	.28**	**.27****	**.18***
10. NARC	**.33****	**.39****	**.37****	.30**	.41**	.37**	.35**	.59**	.21**	---	.34**	**.21****	**-.57****
11. SCO_Abil	**.29****	**.23****	**.22****	.06	.17*	.09	.08	**.44****	**.31****	**.37****	---	**.29****	**-.02**
12. SCO_Opin	**.08**	**-.00**	**.01**	-.12	.00	-.10	-.08	**.15***	**.04**	**.07**	**.29****	---	**-.08**
13. Satisfaction	**-.24****	**-.35****	**-.25****	-.45**	-.61**	-.63**	-.72**	**-.17***	**.18***	**-.50****	**-.07**	**.12**	---

Note. Dating (*n*= 262) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 203) correlations are above the diagonal.**p* <.05, ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. . Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies*, *50*, 261-278. BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L.

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Table B38.
Partial-Correlations between Neuroticism, Hostility, Uncertainty and Comparison Orientation, Satisfaction in the Dating and Married Samples controlling for Gender

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.BFI_Neuroticism	---	**.67****	**.52****	**.27****	**.21****	**.33****	**.26****	**.29****	**-.08**	**.36****	**.34****	**-.06**	**-.24****
2.PANAS_Negative Affect	**.66****	---	**.45****	**.26****	**.18****	**.29****	**.21****	**.23****	**-.02**	**.32****	**.32****	**-.16**	**-.15***
3.Hostility	**.52****	**.49****	---	**.25****	**.17***	**.15***	**.12**	**.24****	**.05**	**.21****	**.32****	**.09**	**-.11**
4. RUS_beh	**.26****	**.31****	**.31****	---	.39**	.53**	.34**	.21*	-.15*	.24**	.06	.08	-.39**
5. RUS_fut	**.21***	**.26****	**.19****	.42**	---	.67**	.79**	.32**	-.15*	.46**	.11	.04	-.73**
6. RUS_Mut-Def	**.20***	**.34****	**.21****	.65**	.69**	--	.64**	.19*	-.23**	.45**	-.02	.03	-.69**
7. SUS	**.11**	**.24****	**.12**	.37**	.66**	.53**	---	.27**	-.17*	.44**	.04	.06	-.78**
8. RC	**.27****	**.28****	**.38****	.27**	.18*	.28**	.07	---	.30**	.54**	.37**	**.23****	**-.28****
9. PARC	**-.06**	**-.03**	**.06**	.02	-.18*	-.08	-.18*	.44**	---	.15*	.28**	**.26****	**.19***
10. NARC	**.35****	**.40****	**.37****	.30**	.40**	.36**	.34**	.60**	.22**	---	.31**	**.18****	**-.57****
11. SCO_Abil	**.29****	**.22****	**.21****	.06	.18*	.10	.09	**.43****	**.30****	**.37****	---	**.25****	**-.01**
12. SCO_Opin	**.05**	**-.01**	**.04**	-.08	.02	-.05	-.03	**.16***	**.04**	**.10**	**.30****	---	**-.07**
13. Satisfaction	**-.27****	**-.37****	**-.25****	-.43**	-.61**	-.63**	-.72**	**-.17***	**.18***	**-.49****	**-.08**	**.08**	---

Note. Dating (*n*= 262) correlations are below the diagonal. Married (*n*= 203) correlations are above the diagonal. **p* <.05, ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. . Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies*, *50*, 261-278. BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L.

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Table B39.
Partial-Correlations between Neuroticism, Hostility, Uncertainty and Comparison Orientation, Satisfaction in the Married Sample controlling for Age

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.BFI_Neuroticism	---												
2.PANAS_Negative Affect	**.65****	---											
3.Hostility	**.51****	**.46****	---										
4. RUS_beh	**.26****	**.29****	**.26****	---									
5. RUS_fut	**.23***	**.20****	**.17****	.37**	---								
6. RUS_Mut-Def	**.35***	**.32****	**.16****	.52**	.67**	--							
7. SUS	**.28****	**.22****	**.12**	.32**	.79**	.63**	---						
8. RC	**.30****	**.20****	**.22****	.17*	.33**	.19*	.29**	---					
9. PARC	**-.10**	**-.05**	**.04**	-.15*	-.13	-.21**	-.15*	.30**	---				
10. NARC	**.37****	**.30****	**.19****	.22**	.48**	.45**	.46**	.56**	.15*	---			
11. SCO_Abil	**.34****	**.28****	**.31****	.06	.16*	.01	.09	**.39****	**.26****	**.33****	---		
12. SCO_Opin	**.03**	**-.04**	**.07**	.04	.05	.02	.08	**.27****	**.27****	**.21****	**.28****	---	
13. Satisfaction	**-.27****	**-.18****	**-.12**	-.37**	-.73**	-.67**	-.78**	**-.31****	**.16***	**-.59****	**-.05**	**-.08**	---

Note. Married (*n*= 203).**p* <.05, ***p*< .01, 2-tailed. BFI= Big Five Inventory; PANAS= Positive and Negative Affect Scales; RC= Relational Comparisons; PARC= Positive Affect Relational Comparisons; NARC= Negative Affect Relational Comparisons; SCO_Abil= Social Comparison Orientation Abilities; SCO_Opin= Social Comparison Orientation Opinions. RUS_beh= Relationship Uncertainty Behavior; RUS_Mut-Def=Relationship Uncertainty Mutuality and Definition combined; RUS_fut= Relationship Uncertainty Future; SUS=Self Uncertainty. . Source : SCO items from Gibbons, F., & Buunk, B. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76,* 129–142. RUS and SUS items from Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication studies, 50,* 261-278. BFI items from John, O. P., Donahue, E. M., & Kentle, R. L. (1991). *The Big Five Inventory-Versions 4a and 54*. Berkeley, CA: University of

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