

FIVE TYPES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MARRIAGES

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This study developed a marital typology based on a nonrandom, national sample of 415 African-American couples who took the Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness (ENRICH) marital assessment inventory. Five types of African-American marriages were identified through cluster analysis using the positive couple agreement (PCA) scores in 10 relationship domains. Relationships between marital satisfaction, marital stability, and the five marital types were then analyzed. The five types (from highest marital satisfaction to lowest) were labeled as vitalized, harmonious, traditional, conflicted, and devitalized. The results were similar to findings in studies of ethnically mixed (predominantly European-American) marital samples including the number and characteristics of marital types.

Major changes in marital quality and stability have occurred in the African-American community in the last century. As recently as the late 1950s, nearly all African Americans married and raised their children in traditional, two-parent households. However, an increasing number of African Americans postpone or forego marriage (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Currently, only 4% of African-American males and 36% of African-American females report being married (Olson & DeFraim, 2000). African-American marital quality and stability have garnered relatively little empirical scrutiny given the societal ramifications of these major relational shifts. In addition, much of the existing literature ignores the potential for similarities or differences in couples' characteristics based on ethnic diversity. Several recent researchers have explored the potentially divergent marital experiences of African-American couples within cultural and sociohistorical contexts (see Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995.)

Marital typologies that explicitly deal with ethnicity may better explain the factors that promote or hinder successful African-American marriages. The main objective of this study was to develop a typology of African-American marriages. We were also interested in comparing these marital types with those found in predominantly European-American samples of couples who had taken the Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication, and Happiness (ENRICH) marital assessment inventory (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987). This study used a cluster analytical approach previously reported by Olson and Fowers (1993) in a much larger study of nearly 7,000 couples that described five marital types. The four specific research questions in this study were:

1. Did African-American marriages exhibit relational patterns or types?
2. Were African-American marital types related to marital satisfaction and marital stability?
3. Were three traditional characteristics of African-American marriages related to marital types?
4. Were African-American marital types similar to those found in samples of predominantly European-American marriages?

By focusing exclusively on African-American marriages, we hoped to provide an appropriate sociocultural context for type development. This was important given the diversity within the African-

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American community (diversity that often is obscured in multiethnic samples). The ethnic focus also was intended to enhance the authors' ability to uncover unique ethnic differences in these marriages when contrasted with ethnically mixed or predominantly European-American marital samples, or conversely, to highlight similarities in the types. By extending the typological approach to an African-American sample, we hoped to provide further evidence of the general utility of marital typologies and a further exploration of their utility in an increasingly diverse society.

Typologies of Couples

Marital researchers and therapists began developing typologies in the early 1960s to uncover "natural" groupings of married couples. Typologies represented a balance between economy and the need for attention to unique characteristics (Miller & Olson, 1990). Type developers tried to make intelligent choices about which individual case characteristics to include or emphasize in the typological development process. The lack of explicit attention to contextual sociodemographic factors (e.g., ethnicity) could compromise a typology's utility.

Researchers have attempted to improve the stability and reliability of empirically developed marital types (Lavee & Olson, 1993; Olson & Fowers, 1993; Snyder & Smith, 1986). Miller and Olson (1990) identified two basic approaches in marital type research: Intuitive and empirical. The intuitive approach integrates the observations of clinical and nonclinical samples as the bases for typologies. Examples of this approach include Cuber and Haroff (1965), who found five types based on the interactional styles of affluent couples, and Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976), who based their typology on the extent of conflict in the marriages of their subjects.

Empirical approaches to marital types have become more popular as researchers employ increasingly powerful statistical analysis on larger and more representative samples. Ryder (1970) and Fitzpatrick (1988) each developed typologies based on factor analysis of individual, rather than dyadic, characteristics. A growing number of studies have used cluster analysis to integrate multiple relational factors and thus more accurately account for marriages and their complexity (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996). Gottman (1979), using the Couples Interaction Scoring System (CISS), and Miller and Olson (1990), using the Inventory of Marital Conflict, are two examples of cluster analysis of observational data.

Along with the shift from intuitive to empirical methods, there has been a move away from basing typologies on relationship deficits towards a greater appreciation of relationship strengths. Snyder and Smith (1986) advocated the use of individual spouses' subjective appraisals of their relationships and warned against basing marital types solely on global measures of marital distress.

Researchers have also attempted to assess marriages at the relational (rather than individual) level of analysis. Fowers and Olson (1992) used the Premarital Personal And Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE) premarital inventory to identify four types within a sample of 5,030 premarital couples. These were described as vitalized, harmonious, traditional, and conflicted. Later, Fowers et al. (1996) demonstrated the predictive validity of these four types by examining relationship outcomes of 393 couples over a 3-year period. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between a couple's premarital type and their marital outcome.

Olson and Fowers (1993) also used cluster analysis to identify five marital types from a primarily European-American sample of nearly 7,000 couples. The five types described were vitalized, harmonious, traditional, conflicted, and devitalized. In this typology, vitalized couples were most satisfied with their relationships, whereas conflicted and devitalized marriages exhibited low satisfaction and high marital discord. Lavee and Olson (1993), using different clustering and couple-scoring procedures, also identified five similar types, and added two more (financially focused and balanced).

Contextual Influences on African-American Marriages

There is convincing evidence that ethnicity and culture play critical roles in shaping the relational experiences of African Americans (McAdoo, 1997). Researchers have empirically linked ethnicity to individual and ethnic group identity (Hunter & Davis, 1994), mate selection (Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin, 1991), parent-child relationships (Allen & Doherty, 1996), and social support networks (Scott

& Black, 1989). Practitioners have also sought African antecedents to prevailing African-American values in their attempts to fashion more effective clinical interventions (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

African-American marriages, though shaped by several unique forces, exhibit much of the economic and social diversity of couples from other ethnic groups. These marriages also are influenced by larger social trends, such as increased economic pressures on wage earners, greater participation of females in the workplace (often precipitating reassignment of gender roles), and the diminishing stigma associated with marital dissolution.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of African Americans married (typically in late adolescence or early adulthood) and divorce was relatively rare. However, during the next 50 years these patterns changed dramatically. African Americans are now less likely to marry during their lifetimes, and first marriages now occur in the late twenties and early thirties. As with other ethnic groups in the U. S., the rate of divorce among African-American couples has nearly quadrupled from 1960 to 1990 (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

In discussing long-term changes in African-American marital rates, Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) have proposed three critical factors in the decision to marry that may also be related to subsequent marital stability and satisfaction. Availability of mates is affected by numerical imbalances in the sex ratio and by economic viability, particularly as it relates to men's ability to provide for their families (Bowman, 1993). As early as the 1980s, Guttentag and Secord (1983) argued that imbalanced sex ratios could result in devaluation and destabilization of marriages, higher rates of singlehood, and more transient relationships.

Socioeconomic factors also shape the marital prospects for both men and women (Wilson, 1987). Many males base their marital decisions on their economic capability (McAdoo, 1993). Similarly, economics may influence females' marital choices based on their perception of their potential partners' economic viability (Tucker & Taylor, 1989). Both genders appear to be delaying or postponing marriage, although females may generally be delaying entering marriage longer than males (Tucker & Taylor, 1989). Increasing social inequality has been a major factor in limiting black males' job prospects and economic viability (Wilson, 1999).

The third critical factor, desirability of marriage, is more difficult to assess given the often-conflicting empirical and anecdotal evidence. Several researchers believe that low marital rates among African Americans are the result of lower desire to marry, particularly among African-American men (South, 1993). Negative expectations about marriage (Broman, 1993) are also thought to play a greater role in the decline of African-American marriages than either economic factors or the sex ratio (South & Lloyd, 1992). However, despite the declining likelihood of marriage, some argue that it is unlikely that the desirability of marriage is actually declining (Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1993). Instead, the African-American community may be caught between the "rock" of significant levels of male economic inviability and the "hard place" of divergent marital preferences among males and females. Therefore, both genders may be finding increasingly less-compelling reasons for entering marriages and maintaining marital bonds in the face of economic and social stresses.

In addition to influencing marital decisions, ethnic identity and cultural values play important roles in shaping the conduct of marital relationships. The term *afrocentric* is defined as being related to ethnic and cultural roots in the African and African-American experiences (Asante, 1989). *Afrocentricity* is theorized to be the result of African Americans' shared history (Franklin, 1987) and similar contemporary life experiences. Three relationship domains in this study were thought to represent afrocentric influences for African-American marriages: Family and friends, equalitarian relationships, and religious orientation.

The significance of extended family in African-American familial experiences has been widely documented (Billingsley, 1993). Nonfamilial alliances (e.g., fictive kin) and friendships have also proven to be significant predictors of psychological well being in African-American individuals (Bowman, 1992), couples and families (Ellison, 1990).

Research has also suggested that equalitarian relationships (measured as "equalitarian relationships" in ENRICH) are a primary component of African-American adult relationships (Staples, 1988), a finding that has been corroborated in the clinical literature (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). African-American parenting practices

also demonstrate egalitarianism in the relative levels of male and female participation in childrearing and the extent to which partners cite parenting as a significant part of their lives (McAdoo, 1993).

Finally, many African-American couples profess a strong religious orientation (Taylor, 1988) that is possibly attributable to the traditional integration of spirituality and daily life within many African cultures. Participation in organized religion played a critical supportive role in early African-American history (Billingsley, 1993; Staples & Boulin-Johnson, 1993) and continues to be a buffer against stressors, such as institutional racism and poverty (Taylor, 1988). Thus, religious orientation may be an important resource for contemporary African-American marriages (Boyd-Franklin & Lockwood, 1999).

This study assesses the extent to which these three afrocentric characteristics (extended family, egalitarian relationships, and religious orientation) relate to marital types identified in a sample of married African-American couples.

METHOD

Sample

This study represents the first use of cluster analysis to develop marital types in an exclusively African-American sample. The 415 African-American couples in this study were drawn from a multiethnic database of married couples who took the ENRICH marital assessment inventory from 1993 to 1995. The demographics of this nonrandom, national sample of African-American couples compared favorably with those of midrange socioeconomic status African Americans in the latest U. S. Census (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1994) and the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA; Jackson, 1991). Most of the couples took ENRICH as part of either marital therapy or marital-enrichment programs. The sample included couples from nearly all 50 states, the majority living in large, urban centers. The average ages for spouses were 33.7 years for husbands and 31.9 years for wives. The majority of couples (70%) were in their first marriage, and 24% of husbands and 21% of wives were previously married. The average length of marriage was 9 years and the range was 1–30 years.

The couples in this study were more educated and better employed than African American couples in the general population. More than 90% of both spouses had completed high school, and roughly 33% reported some graduate education. The high level of academic achievement carried over into the workplace, given that 59% of wives and 74% of husbands reported full-time employment. More than half the spouses reported that they held professional/executive positions or work in sales, technical, or clerical positions. Although many couples (33% wives, 41% husbands) reported individual annual incomes ranging from \$15,000 to \$29,000, 44% of husbands and 34% of wives reported annual incomes >\$30,000. Finally, the overwhelming majority of husbands and wives in the study reported a religious affiliation, most frequently Baptist.

Assessment Measure (ENRICH)

ENRICH is a self-report, marital assessment (Olson et al., 1987) composed of 16 demographic questions followed by 125 items in 13 scales that survey the couple's attitudes on a range of relationship domains. The 10 scales used in this study covered personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, egalitarian roles, and religious orientation. Scales for marital adaptability, marital cohesion, and marital satisfaction were omitted from the cluster analysis to avoid collinearity problems. However, after clustering, the marital satisfaction scale and marital stability scales were compared to the five marital types.

ENRICH has been empirically validated in numerous studies and has demonstrated solid reliability and validity (Fowers & Olson, 1989). Internal consistencies ranged from a low of .68 (egalitarian roles) to .90 (communication) with average of .81 ($n = 1,542$). Test-retest reliability for ENRICH over a 4-week period ranged from a low of .77 (leisure activities) to .92 (sexual relationship) with a mean of .86 ($n = 115$; Olson et al., 1987). Construct validity is supported by moderate correlations between ENRICH scales and couples' self-reported marital satisfaction (.41–.60) and life satisfaction (.32–.41; Olson, 1996). Concurrent validity is demonstrated by comparisons between ENRICH and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale, with correlations of .73 for individual scores and .81 for dyadic scores ($n = 1,200$; Olson et al., 1989). Finally,

ENRICH scales have demonstrated good criterion validity by successfully discriminating between satisfied and dissatisfied couples with >90% accuracy (Fowers & Olson, 1989).

Scoring

ENRICH measurements were made at both the individual and dyadic levels. For this analysis, the level of positive couple agreement (PCA) was used. These scores are a dyadic measure of the couple's positive consensus on each relationship domain, and they ranged from 0 to 100. An item was scored as a positive PCA item if the partners agreed with a positive item (e.g., "I like how we communicate") or disagreed with a negative item (e.g., "We have problems with our communication"). This allowed the researchers to gain deeper understanding of responses that indicated couple agreement. For example, on a given topic, positive agreement ("We agree on this") could be differentiated from negative agreement ("We agree that we disagree"). The latter then could be highlighted as a topic for special research or clinical focus. Each of the 10 scales used in this study contained 10 items that participants responded to using either a 5-point Likert scale (1 = agree strongly; 2 = agree; 3 = undecided; 4 = disagree; 5 = disagree strongly), or categorical responses (e.g., for marital status).

Along with the PCA scores, several questions from the demographic section were used in the analysis, including past marital status, global marital satisfaction, and consideration of divorce. Marital status was measured by a 1-item, 6-response (Likert-type) question, with responses collapsed into two groups, "married, first marriage" and "other," to facilitate χ^2 analysis. Global marital satisfaction was assessed by a 1-item question with five Likert-type responses ranging from "extremely satisfied" to "dissatisfied." Responses provided another measurement of marital satisfaction to use in evaluating the marital types. Consideration of divorce was determined by the one-item question, "Have you ever considered separation or divorce?" This measure was extended to reflect dyadic consideration of divorce by grouping couples into three categories: Neither partner, one partner, or both, had ever considered divorce or separation.

Cluster Analyses

This study used cluster analysis to develop patterns of relationship attributes that constituted the marital types. The data analyses were divided into five stages. First, the sample was divided in half in order to enable validation of the cluster solution. Second, potential cluster solutions were developed through hierarchical, agglomerative cluster analysis of the first half of the data. Third, these alternatives were narrowed down to an optimal solution through *k*-means cluster analysis, and evaluation of between- and within-cluster similarity of competing cluster solutions. Fourth, the optimal cluster solution was used to classify the second half of the data. Fifth, univariate analysis of the variance (ANOVA) and χ^2 analyses were used to examine relationships between the marital types and various relationship domains (as measured by PCA scores and 1-item variables). Pearson's correlations were also used to determine if Afrocentric influences were associated with African-American marital types of more satisfied couples.

A hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis was performed on the first half of the sample ($n = 207$). To minimize biases inherent in specific cluster analytical methods, several different methods of clustering the data were used. These included the average linkage (within groups), single linkage, centroid, Ward's, and various density methods. The outputs of two computer programs, Statistical Analysis for Sociologists (SAS) and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), were compared to further ensure the stability of the results.

To determine how many natural clusters exist within a given sample, various stopping rules have been developed. Unfortunately, all of these methods have been shown to exhibit sample-dependent biases that make their generic use problematic. As the true underlying cluster structure of the present sample was unknown, a strategy seeking the consensus of a variety of methods was adopted.

The consensus suggested that there were probably more than four but fewer than seven clusters. The SAS Ward's and two-stage analysis suggested five or six clusters; SPSS analyses were less conclusive pointing to four, five, or six clusters. A series of *k*-means cluster analyses helped determine which of the possible cluster solutions ($k = 4, 5, 6, \text{ and } 7$ clusters) was most appropriate. Imposition of a minimum cluster membership rule ($\geq 5\%$ of total sample) eliminated cluster solutions that exhibited clusters of only two to three couples. After examining the *k*-means analyses, two-, five-, and six-cluster solutions were selected as

prime candidates for classifying the sample.

Two additional criteria were used to make the final determination of the optimal number of couple types. The first criterion was a measure of homogeneity developed by Tryon and Bailey (1970). Their homogeneity index ($h = \text{SQRT}(1 - [\text{Total Variance}/\text{Within Cluster Variance}])$) uses cluster variances to assess the similarity of members within clusters. Overall homogeneities for alternative cluster solutions (as indicated by the average of their individual cluster homogeneities) were also compared. The additional cluster in the six-cluster solution was expected to provide greater homogeneity than the five-cluster solution, but five-cluster solutions were as efficient as the six-cluster solution.

The second criterion measured the degree of similarity between cluster solutions. The five- and six-cluster solutions developed in this study were compared with each other and to a previously reported five-cluster solution by Olson and Fowers (1993). Their study of marital types used the same measurement instrument (ENRICH) and a larger, primarily European-American sample. This referent provided a convenient benchmark for testing the relative strength of the alternative cluster solutions in this study.

A replication of the typology developed with the first half of the sample ($n = 207$) was then done with the second half of the sample ($n = 208$). Using the same clustering procedures, the analysis of the second half of the sample yielded the same five marital types, including similar percentages of couples in each type. Because of the similarity in the results of the two analyses, the couples in the second half of the sample were assigned to types based on the typology developed with the first half of the sample.

RESULTS

In answer to our first research question, there was convincing evidence of five types of African-American marriages based on analyses of the 415 couples in this study. Regarding our second research question, these marital types appeared to be significantly related to several measures of marital satisfaction, marital stability, and the consideration of divorce. The relationships were significant for both wives and husbands at both the individual and dyadic levels of analysis.

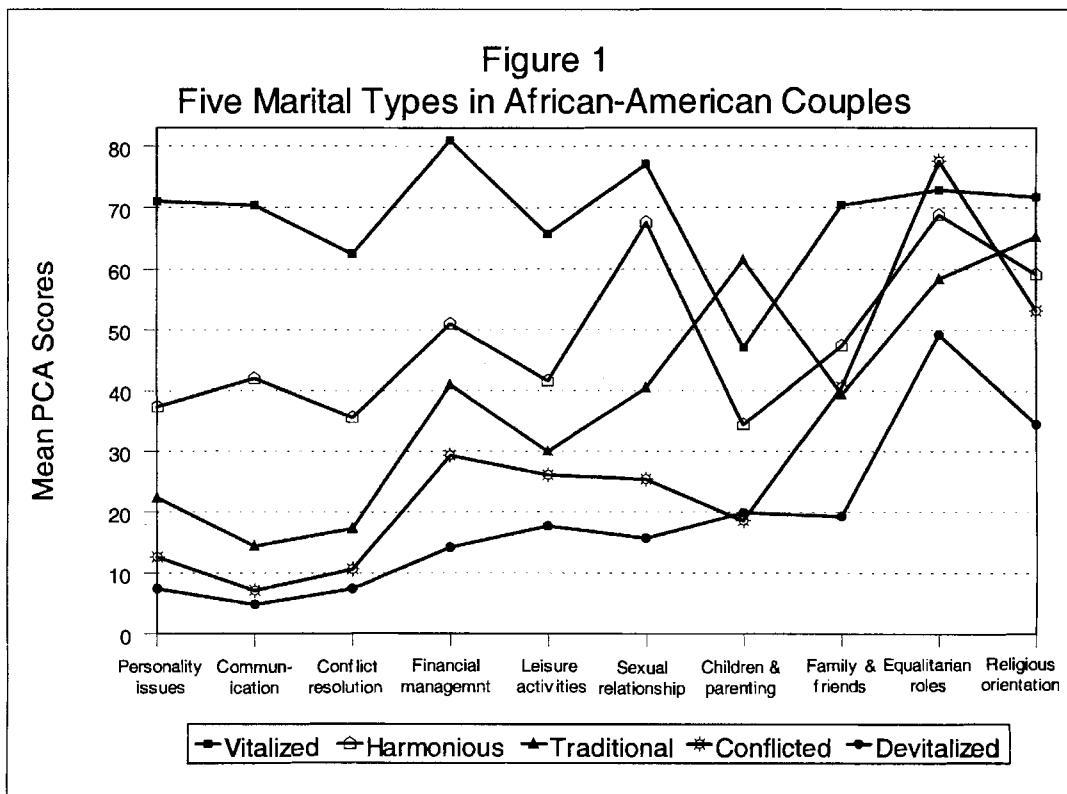
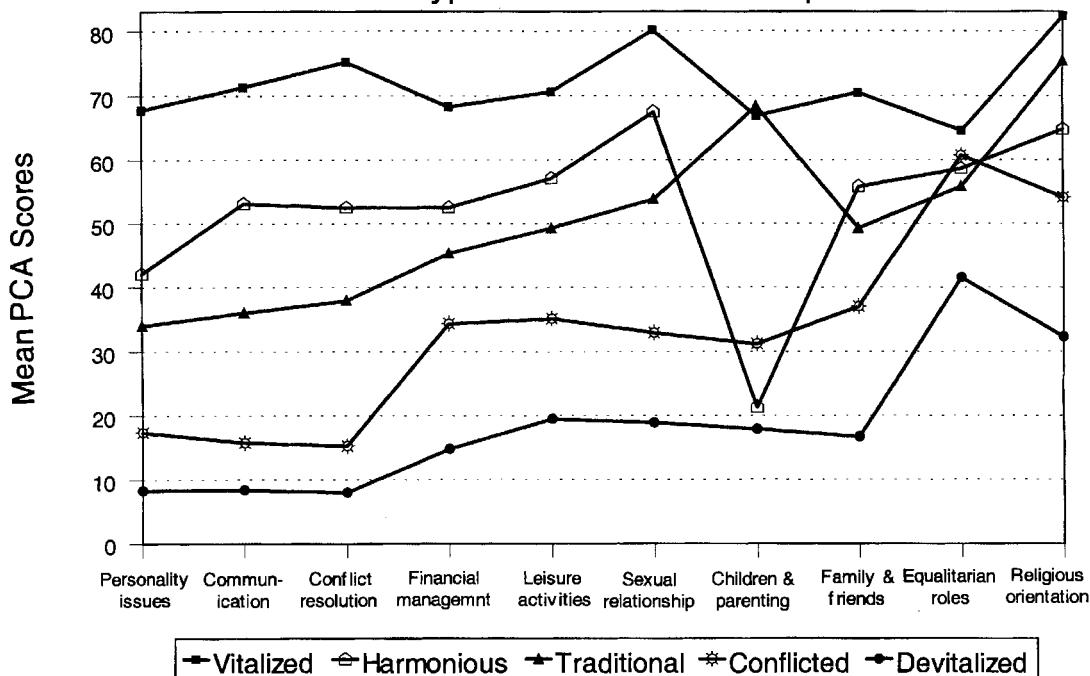


Figure 2
Five Marital Types in Caucasian Couples



Description of Five African-American Marital Types

The African-American marital types identified in descending order of their average PCA profiles are referred to as vitalized, harmonious, traditional, conflicted, and devitalized couples (see Figure 1). Because the five African-American marital types were similar to the five marital types found by Olson and Fowers (1993), we used same nomenclature (see Figure 2).

Vitalized couples ($n = 28$; 6.7%) exhibited the highest mean PCA scores, which ranged between 60 and 80 (see Table 1). Despite fluctuations within this range, the high scores continued across all relationship domains with one exception, a decline to a score of 47 at children and parenting. More than 90% of vitalized spouses reported being either very satisfied or extremely satisfied on the original 1-item measure in ENRICH, the highest percentage of any group. Vitalized couples were most likely to have PCA scores in the “strength area” (65%) of the marital satisfaction scale, and in 21 of these 28 couples (75%), neither partner had ever considered divorce. Vitalized couples were slightly more likely to have no children. Both spouses were typically graduate-school educated, with no educational-level discrepancy. Vitalized wives were slightly more likely (than even their husbands), to have reported professional positions, which was reflected in somewhat higher individual incomes.

Harmonious couples ($n = 50$; 12.0%) exhibited slightly lower overall scores than the vitalized type, with peaks and troughs occurring at different points in their profile. The PCA scores for most of the first eight domains ranged between 30 and 50 with one noticeable exception. There was a peak (68) at sexual relationships. The scores for egalitarian roles (69) and religious orientation (59) were also higher than the other types. Like vitalized couples, harmonious couples were less likely to be dissatisfied with their marriages and less than one-third had ever considered divorce. Harmonious couples were more likely to be childless or usually had fewer than three children. Harmonious husbands were more likely to have a graduate education, and their wives were more likely to have college degrees than would be expected by

TABLE 1
Mean PCA Statistics for Five Marital Types

Relationship domain	<u>Vitalized</u>		<u>Harmonious</u>		<u>Traditional</u>		<u>Conflicted</u>		<u>Devitalized</u>		<i>M</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Personality issues	71.1	15.0	37.4	17.1	22.4	15.0	12.6	12.0	7.4	8.9	195*
Communication	70.4	21.3	42.0	16.0	14.4	12.5	7.1	9.3	4.8	8.4	269*
Conflict resolution	62.5	14.6	35.6	16.4	17.3	12.7	10.6	11.1	7.4	9.2	172*
Financial management	81.0	15.7	51.0	21.9	41.0	26.2	29.3	21.9	14.2	13.7	94*
Leisure activities	65.7	17.9	41.6	17.6	30.0	16.5	26.1	14.5	17.7	12.4	77*
Sexual relationship	77.1	16.7	67.6	18.0	40.5	21.2	25.4	19.1	15.7	15.9	134*
Children and parenting	47.1	37.8	34.4	29.3	61.5	18.7	18.6	18.9	19.9	17.2	54*
Family and friends	70.4	13.5	47.4	18.5	39.4	21.3	40.6	19.6	19.3	15.4	68*
Equalitarian roles	72.9	15.1	68.8	17.9	58.4	14.9	77.6	12.7	49.2	15.0	68*
Religious Orientation	71.8	27.6	59.2	30.8	65.3	22.7	53.2	28.5	34.5	21.6	28*

* $p < .001$

chance. Harmonious wives also reported full-time, professional employment more often than wives in other marital types.

Traditional couples ($n = 62$; 14.9%) exhibited a low-to-high pattern in PCA scores across domains. They had relatively low scores on personality issues, communications, and conflict resolution (22, 14, 17, respectively) and moderately higher scores on financial management (41), leisure activities (30), and sexual relationship (40). These were followed by a sharp rise to the sample's highest scores for children and parenting (61). A decline at family and friends (39) was followed by a rebound on egalitarian roles (58) and religious orientation (65). Traditional couples were more often satisfied in their marriages than dissatisfied, although the husbands as a group appeared to be slightly more satisfied than their wives. Traditional couples were more likely to be in their first marriage than any other type, and they were least likely to be childless (typically reporting two children). Traditional spouses reported median levels of education for this sample (some college or technical education at highest level), and were typically employed in sales, technical, or service occupations.

Conflicted couples ($n = 111$; 26.7%), reported low PCA scores on personality issues (13), communication (7), and conflict resolution (11). A moderate rise on financial management (29), leisure activities (26), and sexual relationship (25), was followed by a drop on children and parenting (19). Much higher scores for families and friends (41) and religious orientation (53) were intersected by the study's highest score for egalitarian roles (78). Compared to couples in the other types, conflicted couples were more likely than other types of couples to have reported marital dissatisfaction (individually and together). They were also more likely to have considered divorce. A greater number of conflicted couples reported being childless than other types of couples. Regarding educational level, conflicted spouses were more likely than other couple types to have reported graduate educations. Of note, there was also more divergence between spousal educational level, with wives having reported higher levels than husbands. Finally, both spouses in conflicted couples were more likely to have reported full-time employment in professional occupations than spouses in other types.

TABLE 2
Mean Percentage Scores on the Five Marital Types

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Vitalized</u>	<u>Harmonious</u>	<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Conflicted</u>	<u>Devalitized</u>	<u>Avg</u>	<u>χ²</u>
Marital satisfaction							
Individual satisfaction							
Wives	96.4	94.0	62.9	35.1	24.4	46.3	118.2*
Husbands	100.0	94.0	80.6	50.5	45.1	61.4	73.7*
Dyadic agreement (%)							
Both dissatisfied	0.0	2.1	16.1	50.5	59.7	39.5	213.2*
Both satisfied	92.6	66.0	35.5	3.8	3.2	22.0	
PCA measure							
Growth area	0.0	14.0	41.9	80.2	93.3	66.3	364.9*
Strength area	67.9	18.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	7.0	
Divorce consideration							
Both partners	10.7	20.0	53.2	65.8	62.8	53.5	118.4*
Neither partner	75.0	50.0	24.2	7.2	7.3	19.5	

* $p < .001$

The largest cluster, devalitized couples ($n = 164$; 39.5%), exhibited the lowest overall, mean PCA scores, ranging between 8 and 20 on nearly all 10 relationship domains (see Figure 1). Compared to spouses in other marital types, devalitized spouses were much more likely to have reported marital dissatisfaction and were most likely to have considered divorce. Devalitized couples reported larger families (three or more children) more often than other marital types. They also reported lower educational levels, fewer instances of full-time employment, and lower incidences of professional occupational status when compared with spouses in the other marital types.

Marital Satisfaction, Marital Stability, and Marital Types

Harmonious and vitalized couples reported high marital satisfaction and high positive couple agreement on most relationship domains (see Table 2). These couples were more satisfied than would be expected by chance. They were more likely to have reported that they were “very satisfied” in their marriage than other marital types, by a factor of two. They rarely reported having considered divorce. These two marital types were followed closely by traditional couples, who reported moderate marital satisfaction, infrequent divorce consideration, and consensus on most relationship domains. In contrast, devalitized and conflicted couples reported high marital dissatisfaction and exhibited low positive couple agreement on most relationship domains. One or both had typically considered divorce, a probable indication of low marital stability.

Strong relationships were found between marital type and marital satisfaction (both individual and dyadic, see Table 2). The 1-item, 5-point (Likert-type) question on individual satisfaction was reduced to a dichotomous variable reporting either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the marriage. Chi-squared analyses produced significant differences for both wives and husbands. Vitalized, harmonious, and traditional couples reported satisfaction more often than would be expected by chance, whereas conflicted and devalitized

TABLE 3
Comparison of Two Marital Typologies: Current Study versus Olson & Fowers, 1993

Marital type	Current study (<i>n</i> = 415)	Olson & Fowers (<i>n</i> = 6,508)
Vitalized	6.7%	12.3%
Harmonious	12.0%	11.1%
Traditional	14.9%	16.3%
Conflicted	26.7%	25.4%
Devitalized	39.5%	34.9%

couples reported satisfaction less often.

The first of two dyadic measures of marital satisfaction combined the spouses' individual scores (on the 5-point Likert measure of marital satisfaction) and trichotomized the sum into: Very satisfied, mixed ratings, and dissatisfied. This split facilitated analysis of the relationship between extreme satisfaction or dissatisfaction and marital type. Chi-squared analysis demonstrated significant differences between marital types based on whether couples were very satisfied or dissatisfied ($\chi^2 = 213.24, p < .001$). The second dyadic measure condensed the couple's Marital Satisfaction PCA score from 10 levels into four summary categories: Growth area, possible growth, possible strength, strength area. The 2 analysis verified a strong relationship between this dyadic measure of marital satisfaction and marital type ($\chi^2 = 364.96, p < .001$).

A strong relationship was also established between the five marital types and marital stability. Responses to the question, "Have you ever considered divorce?" were used to construct dichotomous variables (yes or no) for both spouses. The χ^2 analysis of these responses produced significant differences for both wives ($\chi^2 = 88.18, p < .001$) and husbands ($\chi^2 = 65.19, p < .001$). A majority of the wives (72%) and husbands (63%) indicated they had considered divorce at some point in their marriages. However, conflicted and devitalized partners were more likely to have considered divorce, whereas vitalized and harmonious partners were more likely to have never considered divorce.

A dyadic measure of "The consideration of divorce" divided the sample into three groups: Neither partner had considered divorce (19%), one partner had considered divorce (27%), and both partners had considered divorce (54%). The two analyses revealed significant differences among marital types based on this measure ($\chi^2 = 118.43, p < .001$). In conflicted and devitalized couples, it was more likely that both partners had considered divorce, whereas in vitalized and harmonious couples, it was more likely that neither partner had considered divorce.

Background Characteristics and Marital Types

Relationships among the five marital types and 20 background characteristics were examined; however, only a few of these were significant. Marital status proved to be a relatively weak predictor of marital type ($\chi^2 = 6.5, p = .16$ for wives; $\chi^2 = 4.1, p = .39$ for husbands). The number of children proved to be a significant predictor of marital type for wives in devitalized and harmonious couples as well as for husbands in devitalized and conflicted couples. In both cases, the devitalized partners reported having more children. Chi-squared analysis of a dyadic estimate of the couple's number of children also indicated that devitalized couples were more likely to have three or more children.

There were also moderate relationships between education level and marital type ($\chi^2 = 19.8, p = .01$ for wives; $\chi^2 = 16.1, p = .04$ for husbands). Chi-squared analysis of a variable measuring divergence in couples' educational attainment revealed small differences ($\chi^2 = 23.6, p = .10$). Fewer devitalized wives

were more educated than their husbands, whereas more conflicted and (to a lesser extent) traditional wives were more educated than their spouses.

Unlike previous marital studies, the marital types in this study did not prove to be significantly related to either spouse's age. Similarly, neither the number of years for which a couple had been married nor the length of time they reported having known each other before marriage distinguished one type from another. Chi-squared analyses of two variables measuring the type of work (occupation) proved to be difficult because of numerous cells with fewer than five occurrences. Recoding the variables produced only moderately significant differences among marital types. Similarly, differences in types based on individual income were only moderately significant, regardless of how the data were summarized.

Regarding our third research question, the marital types were not significantly differentiated by any of the three characteristics of afrocentric influence. Values of the *F*-statistic for family and friends, egalitarian roles, and religious orientation were not significant. Thus, the African-American marital types developed in this study were not significantly related to the afrocentric variables compared to other relationship domains, such as personality issues, communications, and conflict resolution.

In answer to our fourth research question, couples in both studies were similarly distributed among the five types and graphic representations of each of the five types look strikingly similar. The five African-American marital types developed in this study were very similar to five types reported by Olson & Fowers (1993; see Table 3). This was surprising given differences between the two studies, such as divergences in their cluster analytical procedures, cohort (approximately a decade apart), and sample ethnicity (all African American vs. predominantly European American). However, they were similar in social class and education—middle and upper class.

DISCUSSION

The profiles of PCA scores for the five African-American types looked similar to those based on European-American marriage in Olson and Fowers (1993), but there were some differences. Mean PCA scores on several relationship domains (e.g., personality issues, communications, and conflict management) were lower in this study than those in Olson and Fowers (1993). The declines for children and parenting in the African-American vitalized and harmonious couples and the peak at egalitarian roles for African-American conflicted couples were also more pronounced.

Comparing this study with Olson and Fowers (1993), in this study there were fewer vitalized (6.7% vs. 12.3%) but similar percentages of traditional (14.9% vs. 16.3%) couples, harmonious (12.0% vs. 11.1%) and conflicted (26.7% vs. 25.4%) couples, and devitalized (39.5% vs. 34.9%) couples.

Clinical Impressions

Knowing a couple's type of marriage can offer therapists some practical advantages when working with couples. This study supported several of the findings reported in recent studies on marital typologies. One of these was the link between marital types and the level of marital satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) within the types. Another was the degree to which consensus on relationship domains, such as communications and personality issues were more indicative of overall marital satisfaction than consensus on financial management and child rearing. In other words, certain relationship domains were more predictive of a specific couple's marital type than others.

Couples in marital types with low PCA scores on personality issues, communications, and conflict resolution (such as conflicted and devitalized) experienced lower marital satisfaction than did couples in marital types that had higher scores on these three crucial domains. This stratification of marital types according to level of marital satisfaction highlighted the relational dilemma of couples experiencing personality conflicts. Many of these couples communicated poorly and, thus, felt unable to effectively resolve their conflicts.

Dissatisfaction with a partner's personality could also inhibit a spouse's willingness to communicate on other unrelated issues (e.g., extended social networks or finances). Thus, personality and communications concerns could increase the number and intensity of marital conflicts. All of these could result in a

decreased, mutual perception of marital satisfaction. The findings in this study support the strategy of improving couples' communication skills as a particularly effective means for increasing marital satisfaction. In addition to improving a couple's ability to discuss and monitor marital health, this strategy could build the couple's confidence in their relationship's ability to withstand conflict without resorting to separation or divorce.

Although conflicted and devitalized couples appeared to dominate this African-American sample, it is important to consider several separate but related factors. Because the sample was largely comprised of couples who were seeking marital therapy or enrichment, it should not have been surprising to find that most of these couples expressed dissatisfaction in their current relationships. Our findings might have been different if the participants had been randomly selected from the population. Use of random, nonclinical samples would enhance confidence that results of such research could be applied more widely to clinical and nonclinical couples.

Areas for Future Research

The results of this study also pointed out the continuing need for more research on African-American marriages, particularly research conducted with larger samples. As this may have represented the first systematic attempt at developing African-American marital types, the authors would suggest additional efforts at type development for African-American couples. Both spouses in this study reported their ethnicity as "African American." However, this category does not account for the considerable diversity that exists within this ethnic group. (e.g., African Americans raised in the southern U. S., African American immigrants from the Carribean, recent immigrants from Somalia).

The couples in this study were more highly educated and affluent than couples in the general population. Although there is a need for research on middle- and upper-income African Americans, the socioeconomic profile of this sample limits our ability to generalize our results to all African-American marriages.

Exclusive focus on either the common characteristics across all marriages ("Ethnicity doesn't matter") or the unique ethnic characteristics of African Americans ("Ethnicity is all that matters") may obscure the shared marital characteristics that emerge from successful analysis of marital types. In the example of this study, analysis of the African-American marital types provides a justification for using a marital assessment tool developed using a mostly European-American population (e.g., ENRICH) with couples from a different ethnic group.

We hope that further research on African-American couples will continue to explore how satisfied couples leverage their relationship strengths to address relationship challenges. The results of such research would promote a better understanding of the dynamic system in which African-American couples live and love.

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