



The Sharing of Attitudes and Relationship Quality

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Abstract: This study examines how the sharing of attitudes matter for relationship satisfaction and union dissolution among Swedish couples. It utilizes a data set from 2009 (the Young Adult Panel Study) containing information on 1055 opposite-sex couples (married or co-residential), and registered union dissolutions up until 2014. Results indicate that couples who share notions on the importance of being successful at work; on the importance of having children; or on the importance of having enough time for leisure activities are more likely to be satisfied with their partner relationship than couples who do not share these attitudes. However, there are no effects from sharing attitudes on the importance of living in a good partner relationship or doing well economically, nor any impact on actual breakups. The study concludes that sharing priorities matter for relationship quality, although this cannot be generalized to all attitudes or even to work-family related attitudes in general.

Keywords: couple-level data; couple similarity; homogamy; relationship satisfaction; Sweden; work-family attitudes



Introduction

To decide on who to share one's life with is for many people one of the most essential decisions in life. Researchers have thus for a long time been occupied with finding out what people are attracted to in a potential partner. One aspect that has been shown to be important is similarity - what is commonly known as couple homogamy. Whether marriage, or union formation, is more likely between individuals who are similar to each other in some culturally important way has been the focus of considerable research during recent decades (Blackwell, 1998; Henz & Jonsson, 2003; Kalmijn, 1991a, 1991b, 1998; Raymo & Xie, 2000; Smits et al., 1998). This research shows that, for instance, partners often share attributes such as education, occupational characteristics, religion and ethnicity (e.g. Eeckhaut et al., 2013; Kalmijn, 1998). There are also studies which investigate the possible consequences of homogamy, such as gender-specific earnings (Dribe & Nystedt, 2013), and the transition from cohabitation to marriage (Mäenpää & Jalovaara, 2013). Moreover, there is a growing interest in studying couple similarity in attributes such as education as an explanatory factor for relationship quality or partnership breakup (Brines & Joyner, 1999; Finnäs, 1997; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Janssen, 2002; Kippen et al, 2013; Kraft & Neimann, 2009; Lyngstad, 2004). It is often assumed that similarities increase the likelihood to stay with a partner, but the evidence for this relationship is mixed.

However, perhaps a more important aspect for the continuation of an ongoing relationship than similarities in attributes such as education is whether partners share notions of what is important in life. Psychologists and family therapists have for a long time been interested in the importance of understanding and agreement between spouses for relationship satisfaction and marital 'success' or union stability, and there is extensive research in this area (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Craddock, 2007; Feng & Baker, 1994; Gigy & Kelly, 1993; Katz, 1965; Luo, 2009; White & Hatcher, 2007), often concluding that marital happiness is related to the degree of similarity between the spouses, and that dissimilarity is associated with instability and divorce. It is likely that couples that are similar in terms of their values in life also have higher levels of understanding and therefore greater relationship satisfaction.

Taking advantage of data from the 2009 wave of the Young Adult Panel Study (YAPS, www.suda.su.se/research/demographic_data/survey_projects/yaps-in-english), with information

from both partners in about 1000 couples, we continue this line of research and pose the following specific question: *What effect does the sharing of notions on the importance of work, family and leisure activities have on relationship quality?* We examine two outcomes capturing relationship quality; relationship satisfaction and actual breakups. This approach bears resemblance with that applied in Ruppner et al. (2017) and aims at distinguishing between different stages and levels of conflict in a relationship. In focusing on the importance of similarity in work-family related attitudes for relationship quality, this study makes a distinct contribution to this research area.

Previous research

Most studies of *attribute similarity* concur that people tend to partner with somebody with similar characteristics, although results differ as to whether homogamy has increased or decreased over time. For example, Henz and Jonsson (2003) found that people in Sweden with the same educational qualifications tend to marry each other, just as in most other countries. However, they found decreasing assortative mating over time, while earlier studies of the United States and in Europe (Kalmijn, 1991a, 1991b) concluded that educational homogamy had increased over time. A world-wide study of 65 countries (Smits et al., 1998) found that there was less educational homogamy in Protestant countries (such as Sweden).

As to whether marriages between partners with similar characteristics are more likely to last than marriages between dissimilar partners, an Australian study (Kippen et al., 2013) found that spousal differences in terms of attributes such as age and education were associated with higher risk of marital separation. Heaton and Pratt (1990), studying religious homogamy, found that in the United States the sharing of denominational affiliation was the most critical for marital satisfaction and stability.

Research on the importance of *similarities in attitudes* is mixed. Whereas some studies find that the importance of the belief dominates over any sharing-effects (Arranz Becker, 2012; Crohan, 1992; Keizer & Komter, 2015), others (or sometimes other attitudinal measures in the same studies) suggest that if partners share attitudes they tend to be more satisfied with the

relationship (Gaunt, 2006; Keizer & Komter, 2015; Lye & Biblarz, 1993). Findings also indicate that partners that share attitudes more often stay together (Arranz Becker, 2012; Block et al., 1981; Hohmann-Marriot, 2006). Likewise, Kippen et al. (2013) found that if the partners differed in their preference for another child, this significantly increased the risk that their relationship would not last.

Crohan (1992) studied the relationship between marital happiness and spousal consensus of beliefs about marital conflict for 133 black and 149 white couples in the United States. Studying correlations between the woman's and the man's answer, she found low levels of agreement between partners. Also, agreement did not have any impact on marital happiness (without controls for the answers per se). Constructing a measure combining the man's and the woman's answers, she found that couples where both partners believe conflicts can be solved through discussion report higher satisfaction than couples where both partners believe the opposite. It is hence not the similarity per se, but the beliefs of the couple that affects satisfaction.

Arranz Becker (2012) arrived at a similar conclusion, using a large data set from Germany to analyze both the impact of partners' individual levels and dyadic similarities concerning values and personality traits. She concludes 'generally, partners' respective individual characteristics appeared to predict relationship outcomes better than dyadic similarity measures' (p. 443). The outcomes studied were both relationship satisfaction and union dissolution. These results are supported by another large study, using couple data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Keizer & Komter, 2015). The authors investigated associations between partner similarity in the socio-economic and companionate domains, respectively, and relationship satisfaction, and concluded that on the whole, dissimilarity in the companionate domain was not associated with lower relationship satisfaction, with the exception of attitudes to family traditionalism.

A study which focuses solely on the importance of actual sharing beliefs, and not on the attitudes as such, is that of Hohmann-Marriot (2006), who used data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), to analyze the importance of shared beliefs about the appropriate gendered division of household labor for union stability among married and

cohabiting couples. She found that couples who do not share expectations about the division of household labor are more likely to end their relationship, and that cohabiting couples had the greatest likelihood of instability when the two partners have widely divergent views. The interpretation of this finding was that cohabiting couples tend to exhibit less effective problem-solving skills. Lye and Biblarz (1993), used the same data set (although the 1987-88 wave of the NSFH) to study how his and her attitudes toward family life and gender roles (both the attitudes as such and whether they are shared by the partners) affect marital satisfaction. Their findings suggest that attitudes in favor of nontraditional family behavior were associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction. The authors interpret this as if such individuals may view alternatives to married life more favorably and place greater emphasis on personal gratification. Moreover, husbands who endorse an egalitarian division of household labor reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than did those who reject egalitarianism. However, some similarity effects were also found. For example, agreement between spouses with respect to female labor force participation enhanced marital satisfaction.

The results of some of these studies are based on quite small samples of couples (<300), while some are based on large-scale survey data with information from more than 3000 couples (Arranz Becker, 2012; Keizer Komter, 2015). The kind of attitudes studied also varies, from quite specific (childrearing attitudes in Block et al., 1981, and beliefs about marital conflict in Crohan, 1992) to widely encompassing attitudes concerning life goals, values and personality in Arranz Becker (2012) and values, personality, and family role attitudes in Gaunt (2006). Hohmann-Marriot (2006) and Keizer and Komter (2015) both focus on the importance of gender role attitudes, but differ in that the former looks at union dissolution as the outcome variable, and the latter investigates how relationship quality is influenced by attitude similarity.

In summary, in studying the effect of similarity in attitudes on relationship quality and stability, it is important to take into account the effects of the attitudes as such and to distinguish between his and her attitudes. The nature of the attitude may also be important, for example attitudes related to the smooth functioning of the family, such as the division of housework, can be expected to matter more than general attitudes concerning men's and women's proper roles in the labor market or in politics.

The present study

Based on research on similarity in attributes, such as education, several theoretical approaches can be formulated for the analysis of the relationship between similarity in attitudes and relationship quality. These are *homogamy theory*, *specialization theory* and what could be called *the 'instrumental' attitudes approach*.

Homogamy theory predicts that differences in attitudes are harmful for relationships, since they imply cultural differences, which could lead to tensions in the relationship (Eeckhaut et al., 2013; Janssen, 2002). Hence, sharing beliefs with a partner would improve relationship quality, because it creates a common basis for discussion and mutual confirmation of behavior and worldviews between the two partners (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). As argued by Hohmann-Marriot (2006), 'if the partners do not share beliefs and expectations, they will lack a common basis for understanding one another, leading to a potentially unstable relationship' (p. 1016). Sharing notions on what is important in life could also enlarge the opportunities for the two partners to engage in joint activities, which also might increase the quality of the relationship (Hill, 1988; Kalmijn, 1998). From this approach, the more similar a couple is in attitudes, the better their relationship quality would be, possibly regardless of the attitude studied.

Specialization theory instead suggests that non-sharing of complementary attitudes is positive for relationship quality (Becker, 1981; Eeckhaut et al., 2011). The basic principle of the assumption is specialization within the couple, and the prediction that partners who complement each other, with regard to one partner being career oriented and one being family oriented, would be happier than couples consisting of two career oriented or two family oriented individuals. This, of course, is not a gender neutral theory, as gender role theory (Amato & Booth, 1995; Eagly, 1987) predicts that, to the extent that men and women occupy distinctive roles in society, this is likely to lead to the acquisition and reinforcement of different attitudes. Traditional gender roles imply that women are family-oriented and men work-oriented (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). In Sweden egalitarian gender role attitudes are normative and widely embraced (Oláh & Bernhardt, 2008). Shimanoff (2009) has argued that the more men and women perform the same social roles, the more similar will be their behavior and attitudes. Therefore, we expect that the specialization theory, as formulated by Becker, will not be relevant in the Swedish context.

The specialization theory can be contrasted to the approach by Levinger and Breedlove (1966), who also suggested that the effect of sharing attitudes on relationship quality might depend on the nature of the attitude. However, they argue that similarity in attitudes is important mainly for attitudes that are ‘instrumental’ to the relationship, for instance regarding childbearing and childrearing. From their approach, similarities in family orientation would hence be more important than similarities in e.g. work orientation which are not as closely connected to the notion of the relationship. However, in the contemporary Swedish context, with its emphasis on gender equality, where the man and the woman are expected to share both the responsibility for breadwinning and the care of home and family, work orientation may also be regarded as instrumental to the relationship.

Our overall research question can be formulated as: *What effect do shared attitudes have on relationship satisfaction and actual breakups?* Even though the evidence is mixed, there is theoretical support for an association between sharing attitudes and relationship quality. Although homogamy in attributes has been found to be rather unimportant for breakups in the Nordic countries (Finnäs, 1997; Lyngstad, 2004), sharing attitudes may have a stronger impact. Thus, our first hypothesis, based on the homogamy theory, reads

(1) *Shared attitudes improve relationship quality*

It may also be relevant to consider the domain of the attitude. Both the specialization theory and the ‘instrumental’ attitudes approach suggest that the domain of the attitude is important, although they would suggest opposite patterns. From a specialization point of view, being different with regard to domains that suggest complementary roles, such as family and work-life, would increase satisfaction. As we do not expect this theory to be relevant in the contemporary Swedish context of gender equality, we formulate our second hypothesis as

(2) *Couple dissimilarity on complementary role attitudes, such as family and work-life, does not improve relationship quality*

On the other hand, from an ‘instrumental attitudes’ point of view, family life would be the domain that is especially important to agree on, because it is likely to be fundamental for a

good relationship, whereas for instance agreeing on importance of leisure time might be less important. Therefore our third hypothesis reads

(3) *Agreement about family related attitudes will be particularly important for relationship quality*

Data and methods

We base our analyses on data from the 2009 wave of the Young Adult Panel Study (www.suda.su.se/research/demographic_data/survey_projects/yaps-in-english). YAPS is a three wave panel survey with data collected in 1999, 2003 and 2009. It consists of one main sample of Swedish born respondents with two Swedish parents and an additional sample of Swedish born respondents with at least one parent born in Poland or Turkey. The present study utilize data from 2009, when the 3547 respondents who participated in either 1999 or 2003 were re-contacted a final time, and asked to give their co-residential partner (if any) a partner questionnaire. Of the 1986 respondents who responded, 1528 reported living with a partner. The partner response rate was 70 percent. We are interested in contrasting the man's view against the woman's and have hence excluded the few same-sex couples included in the data. This leaves us with an analytic sample of 1055 respondents and their partners of the opposite sex. The data is managed so that we separate between the man and woman rather than between respondents and partners. The two main advantages from using the YAPS dataset for the present study are that both partners have reported their own relationship quality and attitudes, and that we have this information for so many couples, compared to most other studies on couple attitudinal agreement that only have access to a few hundred couples, at the most.

Attitudes

In order to assess the importance that the respondents assign to different domains of life, we make use of five questions on the importance of work, family and leisure activities. The question reads "People have different opinions on what is important in life. Please state how important you believe it is to achieve the following in your life" (1) To have a lot of time for leisure

activities; (2) To do well economically; (3) To be successful at my work; (4) To live in a good (cohabiting or married) relationship; (5) To have children. The respondents are asked to rate the five items on a scale from 1 (*Unimportant*) to 5 (*Very important*). Because of a skewed distribution, we have combined answers 1-3 into one category, which enables us to separate between (1) “Unimportant or neutral”, (2) “Important”, and (3) “Very important”. We examine the five items separately.

Relationship satisfaction and actual breakups

We examine two outcomes capturing relationship quality; relationship satisfaction and actual breakups. This approach bears resemblance with that applied in Ruppner et al. (2017) and aims at distinguishing between different stages and levels of conflict in a relationship.

We measure relationship satisfaction by the question (asked to both main respondents and partners): “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your relationship with your partner?” Responses are originally on a five point scale: (1) “Very dissatisfied”, (2) “Somewhat dissatisfied”, (3) “Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied”, (4) “Somewhat satisfied”, and (5) “Very satisfied”. As most respondents and partners report being very satisfied with their relationship (around 60 percent of all women and men), we create a dichotomous measure distinguishing between 5 (“Very satisfied”) and 1-4 (“Some dissatisfaction”).

Actual breakup is estimated by linking data derived from registers on civil status changes. For married couples we estimate breakup by whether a divorce has taken place after the survey (2009-2014). For cohabiting couples, we can only estimate breakup if the partners have at least one common child in 2009. For these couples, breakup is estimated as whether the partners at any time between 2009 and 2014 live in different properties (*fastigheter*). Cohabiting individuals with no common children are excluded from the analysis of actual breakup. This means that we likely underestimate union dissolution, as we do not capture the group of couples that presumably is the most likely to end their relationship.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of main independent and dependent variables

Variables			Percentages
Relationship satisfaction (n=1055)	Man	No	40.4
		Yes	59.6
	Woman	No	37.3
		Yes	62.7
Couple breakup (n=803)	No	87.4	
	Yes	12.6	
How important do you believe it is to achieve the following in your life?			
<i>To have time for leisure activities</i>	Man	1-3	36.1
		4	35.8
		5	28.1
	Woman	1-3	44.3
		4	32.1
		5	23.6
Sharing	Yes	42.9	
<i>To do well economically</i>	Man	1-3	15.7
		4	46.2
		5	38.1
	Woman	1-3	10.9
		4	42.2
		5	46.9
Sharing	Yes	46.5	
<i>To be successful at work</i>	Man	1-3	38.7
		4	43.0
		5	18.3
	Woman	1-3	39.0
		4	46.5
		5	14.5
Sharing	Yes	45.6	
<i>To live in a good partner relationship</i>	Man	1-3	8.2
		4	31.9
		5	59.9
	Woman	1-3	4.9
		4	21.3
		5	73.8
Sharing	Yes	57.9	
<i>To have children</i>	Man	1-3	21.8
		4	39.4
		5	38.8
	Woman	1-3	17.6
		4	26.1
		5	56.3
Sharing	Yes	47.6	

Table 1 describes the distribution of our main independent and dependent variables, as well as the percentage of couples who share attitudes. Missing values are excluded (generally around 0.5 percent, for the importance of children it is 1.3 percent for women and men alike). Couples generally report high levels of relationship satisfaction, 60 percent of the men and 63 percent of the women report the highest level of relationship satisfaction (5 on the scale 1-5). Only almost 13 percent of the couples for whom we can measure breakups (married or cohabiting with joint children) experience a breakup during the five years following the survey. Living in a good partner relationship is very important for young (cohabiting or married) Swedes today, and individuals generally put more emphasis on this than on their career or on doing well economically. Only 38 percent of all men and 47 percent of all women who live in a co-residential partnership believe it is very important to do well economically, and 18 and 14 percent of all men and women, respectively, believe it is very important to be successful at work. This can be compared to the fact that 74 percent of all women and 60 percent of all men consider it to be very important to live in a good partner relationship. However, this should not be interpreted as a general family orientation, as the child orientation is generally not very high. Almost 22 percent of all men and 18 percent of all women do not consider having children as a particularly important part of life, and only 39 percent of all men and 56 percent of all women consider it to be very important.

The highest level of sharing attitudes is for attitudes to the importance of living in a good partner relationship (almost 58 percent), whereas the level of agreement regarding the importance of leisure time is lower (43 percent). 48 percent of the couples in our sample agree on the importance of having children. Note that these figures do not take into account the distribution of the original variable in the population. If the variation in a variable is greater, the likelihood of finding a similar partner is per default lower, whereas if everyone has the same value, it will be difficult to find a partner who is different. In an unpublished manuscript using the same data set as the present study, the authors examine similarity in attitudes while taking this into account, and finds that couples systematically are more similar than dissimilar in their attitudes (Dahlberg & Duvander, unpublished manuscript).

Analytical strategy

We perform separate logistic regressions on how the 5 attitudinal measures related to the 3 studied outcomes (the man's relationship satisfaction, the woman's relationship satisfaction and whether the couple experiences a breakup), leading to a total of 15 models. We will distinguish between 'belief effects' (effects from attitudes as such) and 'sharing effects' (effects from partners sharing these attitudes), while recognizing that regarding relationship satisfaction there is no true causality, i.e. it is not possible to talk about 'effects' as attitudes and relationship satisfaction are measured at the same time, namely at the 2009 survey.

In order to be able to capture the presence of 'sharing effects', we need to know whether there is an additional effect from both partners holding a certain attitude, apart from the effect from the two partners' separate attitudes. We are inspired by a strategy developed by Mäenpää and Jalovaara (2013), and do this in two steps. Initially, we run a model only containing control variables and the main effects from the man's and the woman's beliefs separately. This model captures 'belief effects'. In a next step, we test whether there is any significant interaction between the man's and the woman's attitudes. If the interaction term is significant, this means that the combined effect from the woman's and the man's attitudes is different from what would be expected by summarizing the main effects, that is, that there is an additional impact from sharing (or not sharing) the attitude. In order to facilitate interpretation of any such interaction, we calculate odds ratios for the full set of combinations of the man's and the woman's beliefs and present these in Figure 1.

In all models we control for ethnic background, common children, civil status, income, post-secondary education, age, and age differences between the man and woman. The models also include a control for the length of the relationship, to deal with possible adaptation effects (Snyder, 1964). Note however that research on whether couples increasingly resemble each other over time (Alford et al., 2011; Caspi et al., 1992; Gonzaga et al., 2010; Price & Vandenberg, 1979), generally show evidence for assortative mating but not for convergence over time (see however Kalmijn, 2005). Thus individuals tend to form couples with those who are similar to themselves in personality, interests and values, and there is only a weak pattern of adapting to each other when couples have been together for a long time.

Results

Belief effects

As the main focus of this paper is the importance of shared attitudes, we only briefly discuss how attitudes as such are related to his and her relationship satisfaction and to actual breakups in the five years following the survey in 2009. The full set of results from the belief effects are presented in Appendix A. In summary, of the five included attitudes, only the two that capture family related attitudes exhibit belief effects on relationship satisfaction. More precisely; attaching great importance to living in a good partner relationship or to have children has a pronounced association with how satisfied the partners are with their current relationship.

Effects from sharing

Moving on to the main focus of the paper, that is, whether shared attitudes improve relationship satisfaction and union stability, we examine attitudes at the couple level. We do this in two ways. Initially, we test whether the effect sizes in the various combinations of the man's and the woman's attitudes deviate from what we would expect if no sharing effects existed, that is, if the main effects models properly described the associations. In order to capture this, we run a model including main effects and interaction terms of the combination of the man's and the woman's attitudes (Table 2). We examine these interaction terms as well as the joint significance of the full set of interaction terms, using likelihood ratio-tests. In order to then gauge the nature of any interaction effect, we include a combined measure of the man's and the woman's attitudes (presented in Figure 1). Here we see how different combinations of his and her attitudes are related to relationship satisfaction (as we find no impact from sharing on union stability, this outcome is excluded from Figure 1). The models presented in Figure 1 are identical to those presented in Table 2, but facilitate easier interpretation of the results.

Table 2: Logistic regressions on the association between the interaction between the man's and the woman's attitudes and their relationship satisfaction and breakups. Separate logistic regressions for each attitude and outcome (15 regressions). Odds ratios.

Main independent variable:			Outcome:		
			Man's relationship satisfaction	Woman's relationship satisfaction	Breakups
To have time for <u>leisure</u> activities	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.01	0.97	0.57
		5	0.82	0.61*	1.83
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.86	1.13	1.31
		5	0.69	0.80	0.81
	Man*Woman	Man4*Woman4	0.95	0.79	1.09
		Man4*Woman5	1.23	1.49	3.10
		Man5*Woman4	1.52	1.29	0.51
		Man5*Woman5	2.27(*)	2.54*	0.67
<i>lr-test of all interaction terms, p-value</i>			.3840	.2296	.2538
To do well <u>economically</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.52	1.03	0.67
		5	0.84	1.64	0.54
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.64	1.68	0.36
		5	0.93	1.01	1.36
	Man*Woman	Man4*Woman4	0.57	0.64	3.19
		Man4*Woman5	1.11	1.73	0.53
		Man5*Woman4	1.14	0.47	4.30
		Man5*Woman5	2.02	0.81	1.10
<i>lr-test of all interaction terms, p-value</i>			.3682	.1351	.1717
To be successful at <u>work</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.94	0.70	0.99
		5	0.48*	0.62	1.65
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.98	0.83	1.37
		5	0.74	0.46*	0.91
	Man*Woman	Man4*Woman4	1.46	1.62	0.65
		Man4*Woman5	0.95	2.66*	0.56
		Man5*Woman4	1.65	1.17	0.47
		Man5*Woman5	4.12*	4.30*	0.39
<i>lr-test of all interaction terms, p-value</i>			.0273	.0385	.7803

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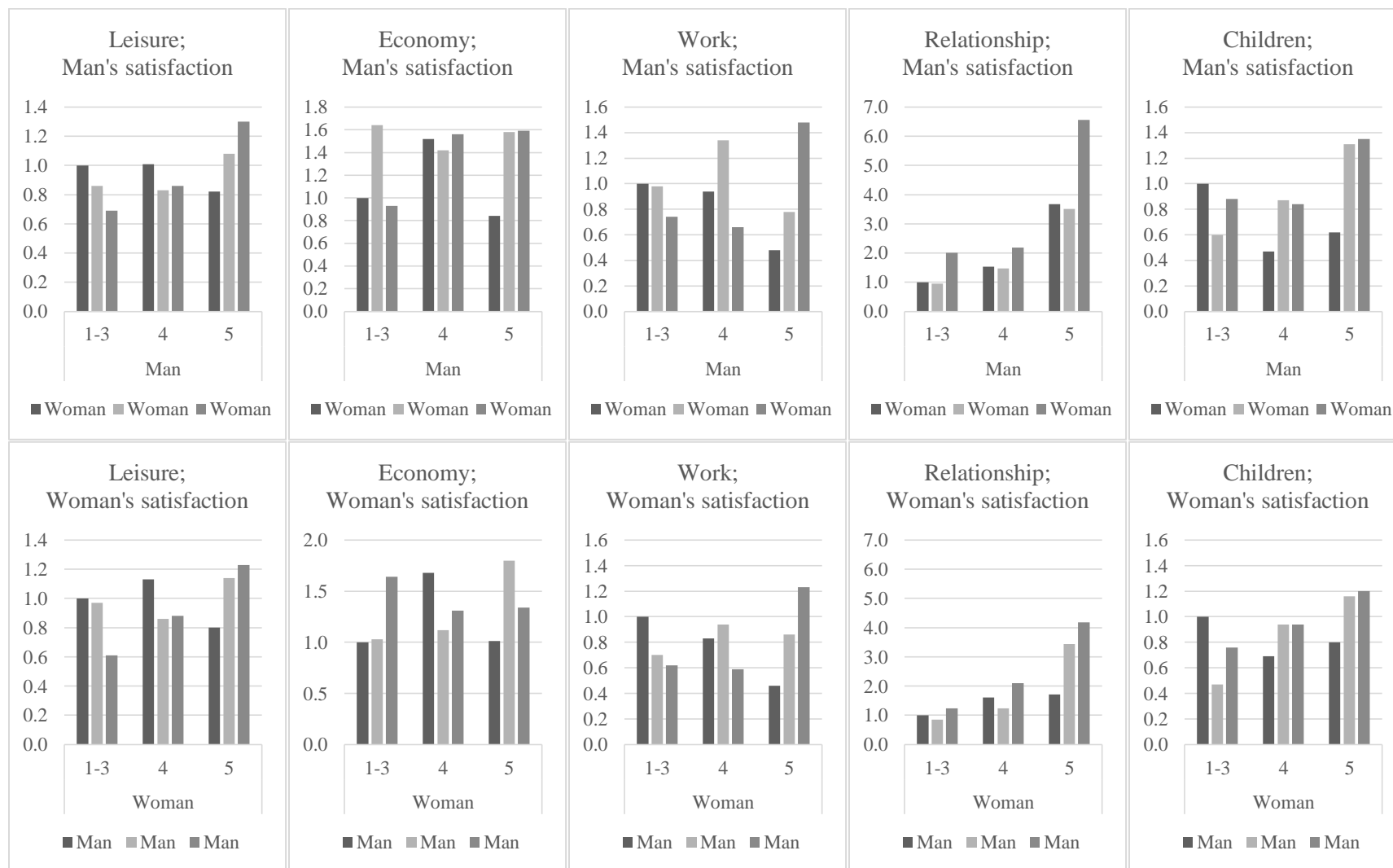
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			Outcome:		
			Man's relationship satisfaction	Woman's relationship satisfaction	Breakups
<i>Main independent variable:</i>					
<u>To live in a good partner relationship</u>					
Man	1-3	1	1	1	
	4	1.53	0.85	0.12	
	5	3.68	1.23	0.43(*)	
Woman	1-3	1	1	1	
	4	0.95	1.61	0.97	
	5	2.01	1.71	0.49	
Man*Woman	Man4*Woman4	1.02	0.90	5.12	
	Man4*Woman5	0.71	2.36	4.11	
	Man5*Woman4	1.00	1.06	0.82	
	Man5*Woman5	0.89	2.00	1.00	
<i>lr-test of all interaction terms, p-value</i>			.9565	.5367	.5738
<u>To have children</u>					
Man	1-3	1	1	1	
	4	0.47*	0.47*	0.86	
	5	0.62	0.76	1.30	
Woman	1-3	1	1	1	
	4	0.60	0.69	0.32	
	5	0.88	0.80	1.34	
Man*Woman	Man4*Woman4	3.08*	2.87*	2.70	
	Man4*Woman5	2.06	3.07*	0.72	
	Man5*Woman4	3.50*	1.80	1.01	
	Man5*Woman5	2.47(*)	1.99	0.30	
<i>lr-test of all interaction terms, p-value</i>			.1391	.1443	.3819

Note: All models include the full set of control variables; ethnic background, common children, civil status, income, post-secondary education, age, age differences between the man and woman, and length of the relationship.

(*)p<.1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 1: The effect from the man's and the woman's attitudes on the man's and the woman's likelihood of relationship satisfaction. Estimates from Table 2. Odds ratios.



For attitudes regarding the importance of leisure time, we find sharing effects on relationship satisfaction at the highest level of importance, as shown by the significant interaction terms described in Table 2 (2.27(*) and 2.54* for men and women respectively). The combined impact from both partners believing leisure time to be very important is hence significantly larger than the summarized main effects from the man's and the woman's attitudes. The likelihood ratio test testing a null hypothesis as to whether all interaction terms are 0 however fails to reject this hypothesis ($p=.3480$ for men's satisfaction and $.2296$ for women's satisfaction). There is no significant association between sharing the importance of leisure time and actual breakups.

By examining the combined variable (Figure 1) we find very similar patterns for women and men. The patterns suggest that if an individual believes leisure time to be unimportant, relationship satisfaction is higher if the partner shares these views (men) or at least does not have completely opposing views (women). Given that an individual believes leisure time to be very important, it is crucial to have a partner who shares this notion – for men this increases the odds ratio for relationship satisfaction from 0.8 to 1.3, for women from 0.8 to 1.2. No significant impact was found on breakups but patterns indicate that the highest likelihood of breaking up is found among couples where the woman believes leisure time to be unimportant whereas the man believes it to be very important. Due to the small sample size and non-significant interaction terms we would however not draw any big conclusions based on this.

For attitudes to doing well economically, we find no significant interaction terms, and the likelihood ratio tests indicates no sharing effects (Table 2). Also, the estimates do not show any uniform pattern (Figure 1).

Regarding the importance of being successful at work, we find clear sharing effects, as demonstrated by the significant interaction term on women's and men's satisfaction (Table 2). Here the joint inclusion of the interaction terms is also significant ($p=.0273$ and $.0385$ for women and men respectively). The results from Figure 1 indicate that given that an individual (man or woman) believes work to be very important, it is crucial to have a partner who shares this notion. For work-committed men, having a work-committed partner increases the odds ratio of satisfaction from 0.4 to 1.4, and similar patterns are found for women. For women, we find similar effects on the lower scale of the commitment scale – if a woman believes work success to be unimportant, her relationship satisfaction suffers if partnered

with a man who believes it to be more important. Specialization theory would predict that if the man is career oriented, relationship quality would benefit from the woman *not* being career oriented. Our findings contradicts this notion. Rather, the results support our second hypothesis that disagreement about attitudes regarding complementary role does not improve relationship satisfaction. Thus, to share career ambition (or lack thereof) seems important for some aspects of relationship quality in the contemporary Swedish context, where both partners are expected to contribute both paid and unpaid work to the family (Oláh & Bernhardt, 2008). Although we don't find any dissimilarity effect on actual breakups, this might be due to the exclusion of cohabiting partners without children in this part of the analysis.

We find no significant interaction terms from sharing attitudes regarding the importance of a good partner relationship (Table 2). Rather it has an additive effect, where the relationship satisfaction is higher if at least one partner believes it is important to live in a good partner relationship, and couples where both partners agree to this statement are the couples who have the highest relationship satisfaction (also visible in Figure 1).

The value individuals assign to the importance of having children appear to have sharing-effects on the relationship satisfaction (Table 2 and Figure 1). If an individual, woman or man, believes it is unimportant to have children, having a child-oriented partner lowers relationship satisfaction. The impact is even larger for individuals who believe it important to have children, here having a partner who is not child-oriented lowers the odds ratio of relationship satisfaction from 1.4 to 0.6 for men and from 1.2 to 0.8 for women. We find no significant impact on breakups.

In summary, our results provide evidence of effects from sharing attitudes regarding the importance of 'leisure', 'work success' and 'children' on relationship satisfaction, but there are no significant sharing-effects regarding actual breakups. One reason for this might be that the analyses of breakups do not include couples who were cohabiting and childless at the time of the survey. One might assume that this group is the most sensitive to a mismatch between his and her attitudes, and their breakup rates have been shown to be substantially higher than married couples or cohabiting partners with children (Andersson, 2002). In other words, if we could have observed the actual breakups of cohabiting childless couples, we might have found some significant effects of shared attitudes. That agreement regarding the importance of having children increases relationship satisfaction corresponds to the finding of

Kippen et al. (2013) that couples who share their preference for another child were more likely to stay together.

By running likelihood-ratio tests for all the different models, in order to examine whether adding all interaction terms improves the model fit, we find that only the full interaction of his and her attitudes to work success significantly improves the models estimating his and her relationship satisfaction. Thus we can state unequivocally that, in the Swedish context where gender equality is strongly normative, sharing is important for attitudes to work success. However, this applies only to relationship satisfaction, and not to actual breakups.

Summary and conclusions

We have analyzed the relationship between attitudes across three domains – work, family and leisure – and relationship quality for about 1000 co-residential (married and cohabiting) Swedish couples. In particular, we were interested in whether sharing these attitudes, influence relationship satisfaction at the time of the survey, as well as breakups in the five years following the survey.

Briefly summarizing the results, we found sharing effects for three out of five attitudes. If individuals assign great importance to having children this is positively related to both his and her relationship satisfaction (although significant only for her satisfaction) and it is important to share this notion with ones partner. Thus, there exists both a belief effect and a sharing effect on relationship quality, although no significant effects on breakups. As to the other family-related attitude (the importance of living in a good partner relationship) we find no sharing effects. On the other hand, for the attitude regarding how important an individual considers it is to have enough time for leisure activities we find sharing effects but no belief effects, where individuals who agree on the importance of having enough time for leisure activities exhibit higher relationship satisfaction. Regarding the importance that individuals assign to doing well economically, this does not seem to be related to relationship satisfaction or breakups, neither in terms of belief effects nor of sharing effects. Finally, for ‘work success’ we find strong sharing effects on relationship satisfaction, albeit not on breakups.

Thus, sharing of attitudes to children, leisure and work success are important for both his and her relationship satisfaction, although we find no significant effects from sharing attitudes on breakups. The results confirm our first hypothesis, namely that *shared attitudes improve relationship quality*, but only with regard to the relationship satisfaction of the partners. Moreover, the positive effect of sharing depends on the type of attitude, and cannot be generalized to attitudes in general.

Further, the analyses confirm our second hypothesis, that *couple dissimilarity on complementary attitudes, such as family and work-life, does not improve relationship quality*. Thus, the specialization theory does not apply to contemporary Swedish society. Our third hypothesis, that *agreement about family related attitudes will be particularly important for relationship quality*, was partially confirmed, in that shared attitudes regarding the importance to have children seem to be related to his and her relationship satisfaction. However, in the Swedish context, attitudes to work success also seems to be an ‘instrumental’ attitude; in fact, our results indicate that, of all attitudes investigated in our study, sharing views on the importance of work success is the most influential with regard to relationship quality.

So why is it that in the contemporary Swedish context, sharing attitudes to work success seems to be so important for relationship quality and, that given that an individual believes work success to be very important, it is crucial to have a partner who shares this notion? This may seem somewhat counterintuitive, if one considers that two career-oriented individuals may create an atmosphere of rivalry and contestation. However, it can be argued that that this is related to the concept of ‘coupled careers’ (Bernasco, 1994; Bernasco et al., 1998), or what has also been called ‘power couples’ (Dribe & Stanfors, 2010). It has been found that in Sweden ‘despite higher opportunity costs of childbearing and the small gains to specialization, power couples who start families are able to combine career and continued childbearing’ (op.cit., p. 847). In the absence of these potential problems, sharing career ambitions may create an environment of mutual understanding and acceptance that rather improves relationship satisfaction. This is also confirmed by the positive impact sharing attitudes regarding leisure time has on relationship satisfaction. Leisure time could be considered as a complementary attitude to attitudes to work success. It hence appears to be important to be partnered with someone who shares ones priorities in life

Studying how spouses' relative resources influence their income development, Duvander (2000) found that Swedish women with high levels of resources gain from having a spouse with the same level of resources. Thus, spouses can contribute to each other's career, and women with the same (or higher) level of resources can negotiate a more equal division of unpaid labour. While using register data on education and incomes, Duvander emphasized that 'the couples in this study may be selected on unobserved characteristics, not the least regarding attitude to work, family and gender equality. Homogamy of attitudes may be as important as homogamy of resources for the behavior of the two spouses.' (op.cit., p. 25). The results in our study indicate that couple similarity in attitudes to work success and career may be a major factor in explaining the findings of Duvander (2000).

Some limitations to this study should be mentioned. Although there are about 1000 couples in our data set, the rather limited size of the sample should be recognized. For our analyses on breakups, the sample size is even more limited as we cannot include childless, cohabiting couples for these analyses. About 80 percent of the sample for studying breakups have common children; thus, we are mostly studying union dissolution for couples who have already become parents, whereas shared attitudes, or rather the lack thereof, may be more important for breakups in the early phases of a relationship. The lack of significant results for breakups could also be due to the low statistical power in these analyses.

Interestingly, our results contradicts studies from other Scandinavian countries (Finnäs, 1997; Lyngstad, 2004) which indicate that homogamy in attributes such as education may not be of such great importance for union stability here. The fact that our findings often indicate clear effects from sharing attitudes on relationship satisfaction could indicate that attitude similarity is more influential for relationship quality than couple homogamy in attributes. Moreover, union stability and relationship satisfaction are two different dimensions of relationship quality. Relationship satisfaction has been found to influence breakup plans (Ruppanner et al., 2017), and as pointed out by Booth and White (1980), 'thinking about divorce is one stage in a complex process of marital dissolution' (p. 605). They found that although breakup plans and actual divorce shared some determinants, there were also factors, such as marital duration and religiosity that had an effect on thinking about divorce, independent of their effect on marital dissolution.

Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates that couple similarity in certain work-family related attitudes clearly contributes to relationship satisfaction among Swedish

couples. In the future, it would be valuable to explore a wider range of attitudes, and to conduct comparative studies to investigate the importance of societal context for the relationship between attitude similarity and relationship quality.

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Appendix A: Logistic regressions on the association between the man's and the woman's attitudes (beliefs) and their relationship satisfaction and breakups. Separate logistic regressions for each attitude and outcome (15 regressions). Odds ratios.

Main independent variable:			Outcome:		
			Man's relationship satisfaction	Woman's relationship satisfaction	Breakups
To have time for <u>leisure</u> activities	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.01	0.95	0.81
		5	1.15	0.82	1.36
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.93	1.08	1.04
		5	0.95	1.23	1.05
To do well <u>economically</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.20	1.04	0.83
		5	1.21	1.03	1.02
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.27	1.09	0.97
		5	1.23	1.25	0.99
To be successful at <u>work</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.10	0.98	0.77
		5	0.83	0.84	1.04
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.21	1.02	1.02
		5	1.02	1	0.62
To live in a good partner <u>relationship</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.22	1.46	0.54
		5	3.41***	1.99**	0.43*
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.95	1.59	2.27
		5	1.63	3.40***	1.16
To have <u>children</u>	Man	1-3	1	1	1
		4	0.87	1.04	0.89
		5	1.36	1.16	0.59
	Woman	1-3	1	1	1
		4	1.30	1.20	0.57
		5	1.41(*)	1.50*	0.81

Note: All models include the full set of control variables; ethnic background, common children, civil status, income, post-secondary education, age, age differences between the man and woman, and length of the relationship.

(*)p<.1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

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