

6. Participants mated with partners who were similar to themselves in terms of how they relate to others as measured by the Object Relations Inventory (“ORI”)¹

Splitting the sample into two matched groups of pairs—consisting of the partners who initiated contact with the researcher for the couple to participate in the study, and those who took their initiating partners’ leads—allowed the running of a paired sample *t*-test for significance between the ORI Factor Scores for each of the groups. Difference at a level of significance greater than .05 indicated that, as a whole, participants in this sample mated with partners who were similar to themselves with respect to object relatedness as measured by the ORI. *It would seem that the old adage, “opposites attract,” does not hold true regarding the way individual halves of these couples experienced and related to other people on a deep psychological level.* This finding does not negate the datum that there were some couples in which one partner had significantly higher or lower ORI scores than the other partner. However, such couples, as demonstrated by the *t*-test were the exception rather than the rule.

The roles of the partners with respect to this study (i.e., one initiating contact and the other following suit) may be evidence of an overarching tendency of the couples in the study to capitalize on their individual strengths, talent and proclivities to assign tasks or take roles within the relationship. The Phase III interviews generated narratives that support this strength/skill-based role and task assignment within relationships between participant partners. Prior research has shown that men and women make unequal contributions in heterosexual relationships, but that women in lesbian relationships demonstrate equality in terms of their mutual contributions to their relationships.² Here, the Phase III interview narratives, albeit limited to a subset of the study sample, seem to support a finding that *participants maintained a “fluidity” as described by one of the participants regarding tasks associated with maintaining the relationship and home. Tasks and roles, the narratives suggest, transcend gender-based assignment.* Sociological and/or anthropological tenets would be helpful in further dissecting these gender related matters as gender roles have been defined as based on social and cultural norms. Same gender relationships are not exempt from role related interactions. There are many questions that could be investigated regarding how individuals see themselves within the relationship and how they identify with gender based descriptors such as femininity and masculinity and what associations those descriptors generate.

¹ For a quick overview of the Object Relations Inventory, please click on the “About the ORI” link.

² Kurdek, L.A. (1998). Relationship outcomes and their predictors: Longitudinal evidence from heterosexual married, gay cohabiting, and lesbian cohabiting couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 553-568.