Type a Behavior and Marital Satisfaction: Differential Effects of Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability

Karyl MacEwen; Julian Barling


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Type A Behavior and Marital Satisfaction:
Differential Effects of Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability

Two hundred couples participated in a study of how two dimensions of Type A behavior exert different effects on the marital relationship. Path analyses, using LISREL VI, estimated that men's Impatience/Irritability exerted detrimental effects on their own and their wives' marital adjustment, but men's Achievement Striving did not. Specifically, men's negative interactions were directly linked to Impatience/Irritability, and indirectly linked via depression. Impatience/Irritability was also indirectly related to men's sexual behavior via depression. Men's negative interactions and sexual behavior in turn directly predicted their wives' marital satisfaction, which predicted their wives' divorce propensity. The model showing the influence of men's Impatience/Irritability on wives' marital functioning was replicated in an analysis of wives' Impatience/Irritability on men's marital functioning. The findings are consistent with a growing body of literature showing that Type A behavior should be divided into at least two components, and that it is the Impatience/Irritability dimension rather than the achievement-oriented or job-involved dimension that exerts detrimental effects on various aspects of marital functioning.

Most research on Type A behavior has focused on its detrimental effects on health and on job performance. A less researched area is the effect of Type A behavior on the marital relationship. It has been assumed that Type A behavior is dysfunctional in a marital relationship: Competitiveness, time urgency, impatience, and hostility are not characteristics generally considered conducive to well-functioning intimate relationships. The empirical literature on the association between Type A behavior and marital adjustment has adopted three approaches. First, studies have contrasted Type A individuals' levels of marital satisfaction to that of Type B individuals, and have typically found higher marital satisfaction among Type B husbands and their wives (Keegan, Sinha, Merriman, & Shipley, 1979; Kelly & Houston, 1985). The second approach has been to examine how couples' behavior types interact. For example, Rosenberger and Strube (1986) found that dating couples were less satisfied with their relationship when the female member of the couple was Type A rather than Type B. No clear differences emerged based on men's type. A third approach has been to correlate Type A behavior with marital satisfaction. The results from these studies are inconsistent, with some studies finding a significant correlation (e.g., Burke & Weir, 1980; Burke, Weir, & Duwors, 1979), and others finding no association (e.g.,

The inconsistent results of studies on the association between Type A behavior and marital satisfaction contradict the intuition that Type A behavior is harmful for intimate relationships. However, these results are consistent with a trend occurring in studies on Type A behavior and other aspects of well-being. Cross-sectional studies (Bluen, Barling, & Burns, 1990; Offutt & Lacroix, 1988), prospective studies (Matthews, 1988), and meta-analyses (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987; Friedman & Booth-Kewley, 1988) have concluded that Type A behavior as a global construct is not a clear predictor of coronary heart disease or other outcomes.

Several studies investigating the multidimensional nature of Type A behavior have supported the existence and construct validity of an Impatience/Irritability and an Achievement Striving dimension (Bluen et al., 1990; Spence, Helmreich, & Pred, 1987). Spence et al. (1987) define Achievement Striving as the extent to which people take their work seriously, are active, and work hard. The Impatience/Irritability dimension consists of intolerance, anger, hostility, and obsession with time. Studies are consistent in showing that Achievement Striving is not detrimental to health, and is a positive influence on various types of performance including grade point average (Barling & Charbonneau, 1992; Spence et al., 1987; Spence, Pred, & Helmreich, 1989), sales performance (Bluen et al., 1990), and academic publications and citations (Helmreich, Spence, & Pred, 1988; Taylor, Locke, Lee, & Gist, 1984). Impatience/Irritability is not associated with performance. Thus, although Impatience/Irritability exerts negative effects, Achievement Striving does not. Moreover, as the studies cited above show, Achievement Striving may even enhance performance.

This bidimensional approach could also aid in understanding the effects of Type A behavior on marital functioning (Barling, 1990; Bluen et al., 1990). Only one study has examined the differential effects of Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability on marital satisfaction. In a sample of medical practitioners, Barling, Bluen, and Moss (1990) found that husbands’ Impatience/Irritability scores were associated with their own and their wives’ marital dissatisfaction, but neither husbands’ Achievement Striving scores nor their global Type A scores were associated with their own or their wives’ marital satisfaction. Although no other studies have differentiated between the effects of Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving on marital satisfaction, other researchers have implicitly suggested that it is the Impatience/Irritability component that is harmful for intimate relationships. Blaney et al. (1986) suggested that the negative relationship between Type A behavior and marital satisfaction emerges because spouses who are Type A react with negative behaviors such as impatience, time urgency, and irritability when they are under stress, and these behaviors may discourage their spouses from providing them with needed support. Others have suggested that it is the excessive job involvement or Achievement Striving component that is harmful to marriage. Burke, Weir, and DuWors (1979, 1980) suggest that the excessive involvement in work of Type A individuals leaves them no time for other relationships. Based on recent research, however, it is likely that it is the Impatience/Irritability component of Type A behavior rather than the Achievement Striving component that is detrimental to the marriage. Indeed, it has been found that husbands’ psychological involvement in work is not associated with wives’ marital satisfaction (Barling, 1986).

Our aim is to further examine the effect of components of Type A behavior on marriage. Although Barling et al. (1990) found that Impatience/Irritability was negatively related to marital satisfaction, they did not explore the process by which this component might ultimately affect wives’ marital satisfaction. In addition to replicating Barling et

![Figure 1. Hypothesized Model](image)
al.’s (1990) finding, we test a five-stage process model of how men’s Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving affect their wives’ marital satisfaction. Specifically, we propose that men’s Impatience/Irritability indirectly affects their behavior within the marital relationship via depression. Men’s marital behaviors then affect their wives’ marital satisfaction, which predicts their wives’ divorce propensity (see Figure 1).

Past studies have most frequently addressed the health consequences of Type A behavior, largely overlooking any emotional consequences. Yet individuals characterized by Type A behavior may endure the negative consequences associated with a pressured, competitive lifestyle (Bluen et al., 1990). Thus, we predict that Impatience/Irritability (but not Achievement Striving) will be associated with negative affect, and the first mediator in our model is depression. The few studies that have examined the relationship between global Type A behavior and depression have found an inconsistent or null relationship, possibly because they have not broken Type A into its components (Barling et al., 1990). When a multidimensional approach has been adopted, evidence has emerged that it is the anger/hostility/irritability dimension, not the achievement-striving or job-involvement component, that exerts negative effects such as depression (Bluen et al., 1990; Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987; Suls & Wan, 1989). Thus we predict that husbands’ Impatience/Irritability, but not Achievement Striving, will predict men’s depression.

The third stage in our process model is men’s marital behaviors. The two behaviors we assess are sexual behavior and negative interactions, the latter of which includes psychological and verbal aggression. We propose that men’s Impatience/Irritability will be positively related to negative interactions with their wives. Supporting this hypothesis, Burke and Weir (1980) found that Type A individuals had more negative interactions with their spouses in their daily lives. It has been suggested that certain facets of Type A behavior are dysfunctional for sexual relationships. Becker and Byrne (1988) suggest that the sense of time urgency that forms one component of Type A behavior may affect sexual behavior. Despite some evidence of a link between Type A behavior and both negative interactions and sexual behavior, the links are not strong. We propose that this is because it is Impatience/Irritability that is the harmful component of Type A, and that studying only global Type A behavior obscures the link.

Furthermore, based on studies on Impatience/Irritability and health, we propose that any effects of Impatience/Irritability on marital behaviors are mediated via depression. We suggest that it is the negative, depressed mood stemming from an impatient and irritable approach to life that results in negative marital behaviors.

There is a great deal of evidence that depression is related to several facets of marital adjustment and behavior. One of the mechanisms by which one spouse’s depression may result in the other partner’s marital dissatisfaction is that the depressed person tends to behave in a negative or coercive manner that may increase the partner’s negative feelings toward the depressed spouse (Beach, Arias, & O’Leary, 1990). Also, there is a tendency for the relationship between one spouse’s depression and the other partner’s marital satisfaction to become stronger over time, especially if the marital difficulties are ignored (Beach, Sandeen, & O’Leary, 1990). Furthermore, over time, a spouse’s depressive behavior ceases to elicit sympathy from the partner and instead elicits psychological aggression, hostility, criticism, and reciprocation of the spouse’s negative behaviors (Nelson & Beach, 1990). Also, there is evidence that depressive behavior is often spouse-specific, with depressive spouses interacting in a less depressed fashion with strangers than with their partners (Beach, Arias, & O’Leary, 1990). In addition to interacting in an aggressive or coercive fashion, depressed spouses are also likely to have a poor sexual relationship with their partners (Walen & Perlmutter, 1988).

The fourth stage in our model is wives’ marital satisfaction, and we propose that men’s sexual behavior and negative interactions will directly predict their wives’ marital satisfaction. There are strong associations between negative interactions, such as verbal and psychological aggression, and marital satisfaction (O’Leary & Curley, 1986), and between a mutually satisfactory sexual relationship and marital satisfaction (Walen & Perlmutter, 1988). For the last stage in our model, we propose that wives’ marital satisfaction will predict their desire to leave their marriage and the extent to which they have taken cognitive and behavioral steps toward ending their marriage (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983).

A further question about the relationship between Type A behavior and marital satisfaction is whether the model proposed above generalizes to the effect of women’s Type A behavior on men’s marital satisfaction. Others have found that the
TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE DATA FOR MEN’S AND WOMEN’S STUDY VARIABLES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (in years)</td>
<td>M: 39.28</td>
<td>M: 36.85</td>
<td>6.00*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 9.50</td>
<td>SD: 9.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual income</td>
<td>M: 12.90</td>
<td>M: 9.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>(thousands)</td>
<td>SD: 28.19</td>
<td>SD: 22.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impatience-Irritability</td>
<td>M: 16.91</td>
<td>M: 16.59</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 3.22</td>
<td>SD: 3.55</td>
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<td>Achievement Striving</td>
<td>M: 18.09</td>
<td>M: 18.06</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 2.92</td>
<td>SD: 2.86</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
<td>M: 35.17</td>
<td>M: 39.02</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 10.52</td>
<td>SD: 13.31</td>
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<td>Psychological aggression</td>
<td>M: 27.54</td>
<td>M: 28.21</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 11.14</td>
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<td>Sexual behavior</td>
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<td>M: 19.61</td>
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<td>SD: 4.08</td>
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<td>Marital satisfaction</td>
<td>M: 108.17</td>
<td>M: 105.92</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 26.83</td>
<td>SD: 29.28</td>
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<td>Divorce propensity</td>
<td>M: 6.75</td>
<td>M: 7.28</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD: 2.92</td>
<td>SD: 3.44</td>
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*p < .01.

The effect of men’s Type A behavior on women’s marital satisfaction does not generalize to the effect of women’s Type A behavior on men’s marital satisfaction (e.g., Kelly & Houston, 1985; Rosenberger & Strube, 1986). The studies on undergraduates that break Type A behavior into its components (Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving) have included both men and women in their samples (e.g., Barling & Charbonneau, 1992; Spence et al., 1987; Spence et al., 1989), but the same cannot be said for studies on employed populations. Either such studies have failed to assess women’s Type A behavior (e.g., Burke et al., 1979), have included too few women to assess gender differences (e.g., Taylor et al., 1984), or have omitted gender as a variable in meta-analyses (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987). Therefore, we will assess whether our model generalizes to women.

To summarize, we propose that Type A behavior should be divided into two components to understand any negative effects on the marriage. Achievement Striving should exert no negative effects, and may even be inversely related to depression. In contrast, Impatience/Irritability should be the active dimension and predict men’s depression, which should affect their behaviors within their marriage. Men’s behaviors in turn should be related to their wives’ marital satisfaction, which should predict wives’ desire to leave the relationship. Last, the same model may reflect the effects of wives’ Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability on husbands’ marital satisfaction.

METHOD

Procedure

The data for this study form a portion of the first phase of a four-phase longitudinal study on the interaction between work and the family. Subjects were recruited randomly from across Canada by a market research agency. They were initially contacted by telephone and asked if they were interested in participating in a study on work and the family. Of the couples who qualified for the study, 323 agreed to participate. To qualify, the couples had to be married or living together, and one partner had to be employed. They were then mailed a letter explaining the study in more detail, along with the first questionnaire package. Two hundred couples completed all measures for this study (62% response rate). Each couple was paid $15 for completion of each phase.

Subjects

The couples in the sample had been married for an average of 13.2 years ($SD = 8.9$), but marriage length ranged from 1 year to 38 years. Twenty-nine percent of the sample had no children, 20% had one child, and the remainder had two or more children. The men had an average of 13 years of education ($SD = 3.5$), as did the women ($SD = 2.7$). Descriptive data on age and income and all study variables are presented in Table 1.

Measures

Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability were assessed by Helmreich, Spence, and Pred’s (1988) scales, which were derived from a factor analysis of the Jenkins Activity Survey. Seven items reflecting Achievement Striving (e.g., putting a lot of effort into work and taking work seriously) were included in the first factor. The second factor was labelled Impatience/Irritability and consisted of five items about impatience, anger, and irritability. The items for the final scales were those that reached at least a .35 load-
Type A Behavior and Marital Satisfaction

In Helmreich et al.'s (1988) study, the internal reliability of the Achievement Striving and the Impatience/Irritability scales were .69 and .65, respectively. Support for the construct validity of the two scales was obtained in Bluen et al.'s (1990) confirmatory factor analysis. Subjects used a five-point scale to reflect the extent to which each item described them (possible range for Achievement Striving: 7–49; possible range for Impatience/Irritability: 5–35).

Depression was measured using the 20-item depression scale from the Center for Epidemiological Studies (Radloff, 1977). A five-point scale is used, and scores can range from 20 to 100. The scale was developed for use on general populations, and focuses on assessing depressed mood. Radloff (1977) found that the scale was highly internally reliable and evidenced good test-retest reliability, as well as good concurrent and construct validity. Also, the scale appears to be suitable across a wide range of demographic groups.

Negative Interactions were assessed using O’Leary and Curley’s (1986) 12-item scale, which includes items reflecting verbal and psychological or passive/aggressive behaviors. Using a four-point response format, the scale has a possible range of 12 to 48. The scale is consistently internally reliable (Murphy & O’Leary, 1989; O’Leary & Curley, 1986), and distinguishes between maritally satisfied, maritally dissatisfied/physically nonaggressive, and maritally dissatisfied/physically aggressive couples (O’Leary & Curley, 1986).

Sexual Behavior was measured using the five-item short form of LoPiccolo and Steger’s (1974) Sexual Interaction Inventory, which assesses actual and desired frequency of sexual activity, one’s own satisfaction and the perceived satisfaction of one’s partner with the sexual relationship, and one’s typical response to one’s partner’s sexual advances (possible range: 5–34). The scale is reliable (Barling & MacEwen, 1992) and predicted treatment outcome in a study on marital therapy (O’Leary & Arias, 1983).

Marital Satisfaction was assessed using the 15-item Short Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959), which is internally (Rosenbaum & O’Leary, 1981) and temporally consistent (MacEwen & Barling, 1988), and has good construct validity (O’Leary, 1984) and clinical utility (O’Leary & Turkewitz, 1978; Rosenbaum & O’Leary, 1981). Scores range between 0 and 158.

Divorce propensity was assessed using Booth et al.’s (1983) five-item short scale comprised of the items most highly correlated with their longer total index of marital instability. Subjects rate the extent to which they have thought about or taken steps toward divorce using a five-point scale (e.g., “Has the thought of getting a divorce or a separation crossed your mind in the past six months?” and “During the past six months, did you talk about consulting an attorney regarding a divorce?”), with a possible range of 5 to 25. The reliability of the scale was .75 in Booth et al.’s (1983) study, with 89% of the variance in the longer index accounted for by the five items in the short scale. They also demonstrated satisfactory concurrent and construct validity for the long scale.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations and internal consistencies of all study variables are presented in Table 2. We used confirmatory path analyses, as implemented in LISREL VI (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984), to test the fit of the proposed model, with all analyses based on the covariance matrix. Inspection of the residual plots indicated that none of the relationships between the variables in either the men’s or women’s model deviated from linearity, and there was no multicollinearity (all correlations between variables were less than .70). Because some of the variables had low internal consistency (e.g., men’s Impatience/Irritability), we corrected for attenuation before testing the models. To do so, the common factor loadings for single factor latent indicators were fixed as the product of the square root of the reliability and the standard deviation of the observed variable; unique factor loadings were fixed as the product of the variance of the observed variable and 1–R² (see Barling, Kelloway, & Bremermann, 1991). This correction also eliminated the possibility that any differences between men and women in the magnitude of individual paths, or any within-gender differences in the magnitude of different paths, would be a function of different reliabilities for the different variables and genders. That is, by correcting for attenuation, one possible “unfair comparison” is avoided (Cooper & Richardson, 1986).

The extent to which the proposed model fit the data was ascertained from two sources. First, the conventional goodness-of-fit statistics produced by LISREL VI—the chi-square statistic, which should be nonsignificant, and the goodness-of-fit (GFI) and adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI) statistics, with values close to unity indicating a good fit.
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>.35**</td>
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<td>.45**</td>
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<td>16. Women's sexual behavior</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<td>-.34**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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Note: Internal consistency (alpha) is presented in the diagonal.
* p < .05. ** p < .01.
fit—suggest that the model provided a good fit to the data. Although the chi-square statistic for the men was significant ($\chi^2 \{df = 12, N = 200\} = 26.98; p < .01$), exclusive reliance on this statistic is inadvisable because of its sensitivity to sample size. Both the GFI and AGFI statistics indicated that the men’s model provided a good fit to the data (GFI = .96; AGFI = .91). For the women’s model, all indices suggested that the model fit the data ($\chi^2 \{df = 12, N = 200\} = 15.95, p > .05; GFI = .98; AGFI = .94$).

The second way of testing the fit of a model to the data is to inspect the magnitude of each of the proposed paths. Even when the goodness-of-fit indices suggest that a model fits the data, it is possible that some of the hypothesized paths are not statistically significant. However, all of our predicted paths in both the men’s and women’s models were statistically significant (see Figure 2). Impatience/Irritability predicted depression and negative interactions. Achievement Striving predicted depression inversely for both men and women. Depression, in turn, predicted both negative interactions and sexual behavior. Women’s marital satisfaction was predicted by men’s negative interactions and by men’s sexual behavior. Likewise, men’s marital satisfaction was predicted by women’s negative interactions and by women’s sexual behavior. Finally, marital satisfaction predicted divorce propensity for both men and women.

Thus, the data suggest that the model fit the data for both men and women. Because a major aim of our study was to investigate the generalizability of the proposed model to women, we also investigated whether any significant differences existed between men and women with respect to the magnitude of the paths, using Hayduk’s (1987) extension of Jöreskog and Sörbom’s (1986) test for equivalence. In the first step in this analysis, models for both samples are estimated simultaneously using LISREL VI’s capacity for multisample analysis. Each parameter is then constrained sequentially in the second sample to be equal to the corresponding parameter in the first sample. Because the models estimated in the second step are nested in the model tested in the first step, a chi-square difference test ($df = 1$) evaluates the hypothesis that the parameter estimates are the same across both samples. The results of this analysis showed that there were no significant differences between men and women in any of the structural parameter estimates presented in Figure 2.

**DISCUSSION**

There were three purposes to this study: (a) to disentangle the effects of Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability on spouses’ marital satisfaction, (b) to test a model of the process by which Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability ultimately affect marital satisfaction, and (c) to assess whether our model generalizes to the effects of women’s Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving on men’s marital adjustment. Although Barling et al. (1990) found that Impatience/Irritability was significantly correlated with marital dissatisfaction but Achievement Striving was not, they emphasized that the correlation they obtained between Impatience/Irritability and marital satisfaction was modest in size ($r = .16, p < .01; N = 135$). Similarly, we find in the present study that men’s Impatience/Irritability and their wives’ marital satisfaction are significantly correlated ($r = .18, p < .01$), but again the correlation is modest in magnitude. Furthermore, the correlation between women’s Impatience/Irritability and men’s marital satisfaction is nonsignificant. Our results suggest that this is be-

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**FIGURE 2. EFFECTS OF ACHIEVEMENT STRIVING AND IMPATIENCE/IRRITABILITY ON SPOUSES’ MARITAL SATISFACTION**

Note: Decimal points are omitted from correlations and standardized parameter estimates. Standardized parameter estimates for men’s Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving on women’s marital functioning appear above arrows; standardized parameter estimates for women’s Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving on men’s marital functioning appear below arrows.

* $p < .05$.  ** $p < .01$.  

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In the diagram, the relationships are indicated with arrows, showing the direction of causality. The correlations between the variables are also shown, with the significance level indicated by asterisks. The diagram illustrates how impatience/irritability and achievement striving affect depression, interactions, and marital satisfaction, leading to changes in divorce propensity.
cause Impatience/Irritability is only indirectly related to marital satisfaction via several mediating stages. First, Impatience/Irritability is directly and positively related to depression for both the men and women in our sample. Impatience/Irritability is also predictive of negative interactions, both directly and indirectly through depression. This is consistent with suggestions in the literature that the irritability and sense of time urgency inherent in the Impatience/Irritability component of Type A are not conducive to positive interactions (Burke & Weir, 1980). Our results show that depression exerts a direct effect on sexual behavior as well. Also as expected, negative interactions and sexual behavior have direct effects on the marital satisfaction of the spouse, and marital satisfaction is a strong predictor of taking steps toward obtaining a divorce.

It should be emphasized that the effect of Impatience/Irritability on marital satisfaction is a very indirect one, exerting its effects through depression, sexual behavior, and negative marital interactions. Our support for the process model may explain why past efforts to find an association between Type A behavior and marital satisfaction have yielded inconsistent results. It is critical to examine intervening variables between Impatience/Irritability and marital functioning. Also, Impatience/Irritability and Achievement Striving predict depression differently, with Impatience/Irritability positively associated with depression for both men and women, and Achievement Striving negatively associated with depression for men and women.

An additional implication stemming from the empirical support of our model is that Achievement Striving is not detrimental to marital functioning either directly or indirectly. Indeed, there is a significant negative direct relationship between Achievement Striving and depression, suggesting that this component may even have beneficial implications for well-being. A job-involved, achievement-oriented outlook may be incompatible with the pessimism, low self-esteem, and inactivity inherent in depression. Indirectly, then, Achievement Striving may have positive implications for marital functioning. Although our model focused on the process by which Impatience/Irritability affects marital satisfaction, it is equally important that future research identify the process by which Achievement Striving is related to well-being. Perhaps the previously noted positive effects of Achievement Striving on job performance (Barling & Boswell, in press; Helmreich et al., 1988; Taylor et al., 1984) and on students' grade point average (Barling & Charbonneau, 1992; Spence et al., 1987; Spence et al., 1989) are mediated by positive mood. The significant negative relationship between Achievement Striving and depression found here suggests that this component may be related to well-being via positive mood. Future studies might address the positive effects of Achievement Striving by including positive mood and positive marital variables.

Despite support for the model, some caution in interpreting the results is in order. The general aim of this study is the prediction of marital satisfaction and marital functioning. Yet marriages that have already resulted in divorce are obviously not included in the sample. Any conclusions would be compromised if this emerged because Achievement Striving and/or Impatience/Irritability affect the propensity to divorce. This is unlikely, however, because the zero-order correlations between a spouse's Achievement Striving and Impatience/Irritability and his or her own divorce propensity and that of the partner are extremely low (see Table 2). Instead, the effects of a selective sample do not threaten the conclusions drawn. Selection out of the sample of those couples with the most distressed relationships is likely to result in range restriction, and, if anything, the resulting predictions of marital satisfaction and marital functioning might well be attenuated.

Second, caution is in order because the fit of a model to the data does not exclude the possibility that other models also fit the data. There may also be other variables that should be included in the model. Bidirectional effects may be possible, and this should be pursued in future research. Until other plausible models are tested and excluded, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions from our model.

A further consideration in future studies should be the modest reliability of the Impatience/Irritability scale. One possibility is that the Impatience/Irritability subscale is itself multidimensional. Although we corrected statistically for attenuation due to unreliability of measurement, more attention to this measure is warranted. The scale contains items reflecting both impatience and time urgency (e.g., "When a person is talking and takes too long to come to the point, how often do you feel like hurrying the person along?", "When you have to wait in line such as at a restaurant, how do you usually feel?", and "Do you tend to do most things in a hurry?") as well as anger and irritability (e.g., "How is your
temper these days?” and “Typically, how easily do you get irritated?”). Based on recent studies, it may be the anger and irritability component that is most predictive of negative outcomes. The AHA! syndrome, comprising anger, hostility, and aggression, may be the essential component of Type A behavior for the prediction of coronary heart disease (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987; Spence et al., 1987). There were too few items in the Impatience/Irritability scale to assess its components, but future research should investigate whether Impatience/Irritability is multidimensional and, if so, whether its components have different effects on marital functioning.

In conclusion, our results support previous research that has found an association between Impatience/Irritability and marital satisfaction (Barling et al., 1990) but not between Achievement Striving and marital satisfaction. More importantly, the results support a process model of the relationship between Impatience/Irritability and a spouse’s marital satisfaction, and suggest that previous research has found only a moderate relationship between this dimension and marital satisfaction because intervening stages were not identified. For both men and women, our results suggest that Impatience/Irritability negatively affects their spouses’ marital satisfaction via their own depression and marital behaviors. Equally importantly, Achievement Striving did not exert detrimental effects on either depression or marital functioning, suggesting that the achievement-oriented, job-involved component of Type A behavior affects well-being quite differently than does Impatience/Irritability. It appears that marital satisfaction could indirectly benefit from a reduction in Impatience/Irritability, but that enhancing marital satisfaction need not entail a reduction in achievement orientation or job involvement.

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