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LOVE STORIES — A TOOL FOR EXPLORING NARRATIVES ABOUT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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relationship satisfaction
relationship narratives
tool for exploring narratives

Summary

Objectives: *The study aimed to develop the “Love Stories” tool for identifying narratives in romantic relationships and to determine which stories are associated with higher or lower levels of relationship satisfaction.*

Methods: *170 women and 139 men currently in romantic relationships participated in the study. Participants completed the “Love Stories” questionnaire and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) to measure their levels of relationship satisfaction. Parametric correlation analyses and nonparametric tests were used to analyze the data.*

Results: *The findings indicate that both men and women share certain common narratives linked to high relationship satisfaction, while other narratives are distinct for each gender. Women valued emotional support and feeling special in the relationship, whereas men placed more importance on reciprocity and friendship within the relationship.*

Conclusions: *The “Love Stories” tool proved effective in identifying narratives associated with relationship satisfaction. It can be utilized in both quantitative and qualitative research, as well as in therapeutic practice. This narrative approach allows for capturing the unique qualities of relationships while maintaining a quantitative framework for data analysis.*

Introduction

Every person organizes their experiences in the form of narratives [1]. A narrative understanding of the world and one’s own relationships can be an important factor in relationship satisfaction. Narratives that build our identity are connected to our experiences in romantic relationships [2]. Men and women have different, often contradictory, ways of experiencing themselves in a relationship. The effort to reconcile them means that there is no single, defined model of a relationship, but rather new models of being together continuously emerge. Each couple organizes their space by defining their hierarchy of values, the boundaries of their own and external behaviors. They establish a shared space, but also individual areas for each partner, so that they retain their identities in the relationship while also creating the identity of the relationship itself. This makes each relationship unique

and distinct. Furthermore, each relationship is the result of a separate, one-of-a-kind story, a combination of two life histories that merge into a whole [3]. This leads us to understand love as a story that happens to the partners. Sternberg [4] attempted to understand the phenomenon of romantic relationships in the context of narratives about them, defining them as love stories. He observed that each partner carries a story about themselves and the other person, as well as a vision of the relationship they are creating together. These stories emerge from the interaction between our traits and the surrounding world. They are ours, determined by previous life experiences, and shaped by individual preferences, reasoning styles, and personality traits. Also, involvement in the creation of our story comes from the stories we hear from others, cultural products, and observed relationship models [5]. The love story we create is one we wish to live out in our lives as much as possible. A potential partner fits into this story to a greater or lesser degree.

A love story can thus be understood as an image of a romantic relationship: what it is like, or what it should be like. It is worth emphasizing that each person can create not just one, but several stories, and the number of possible stories is infinite. Research findings [3, 4] show that partners report a need for psychological security, mutual trust, and emotional support. They want to share common experiences, be companions in life, and develop through experiences derived from the relationship. They also desire the durability of the bond. While they have many expectations regarding the relationships they create, their view on how these tasks should be fulfilled and the roles partners should play is no longer so obvious. Also, in every relationship, there is a mix of events such as the first meeting, first sexual intercourse, or random events. All these elements form a complex process leading to the current situation in a particular relationship. These events make up the relationship's story.

Sternberg [4] proposed a classification of love stories that refers to the internal traits of the relationship and can help in understanding it. He distinguished five types of love stories: asymmetrical, object-related, symmetrical, narrative, and genre-based. He argued that love stories, though unique, could be assigned to specific categories. Research findings [5] show preferences for love stories in close relationships based on gender and attachment patterns. There are also types of love stories associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the similarity of preferred love stories in a partner dyad serves as a positive predictor of relationship satisfaction, while the preference for certain, so-called maladaptive stories, is a negative predictor. Studies [7] conducted on a Polish population showed different results: relationship satisfaction was positively correlated with the preference for some adaptive and maladaptive love stories and with the similarity of preferred love stories, but only in couples with a shorter relationship duration. The discrepancy of these results may stem from cultural differences. Concerns also arise regarding the questionnaire used in both studies, where love stories are primarily understood in terms of beliefs, with their narrative structure being overlooked.

Regardless of the tool used, both in American and Polish cultures, the thesis about the importance of the similarity of partners' love stories for the quality of their relationship has received empirical support. Studies show that the level of sympathy towards the other person depends on the perceived similarity of mutual attitudes and values [8]. Relationship stability is higher when partners have similar personality traits and when the quality of

their relationship is good [9]. When it comes to similarity in partners, it is also crucial to consider the roles assumed within the dyad. If they align, they are associated with happiness in the romantic relationship. In every relationship, these roles are defined individually, and factors such as personality traits, personal experiences, or accepted social norms influence their formation [10]. Sternberg [4] takes a similar stance, indicating complementary or symmetrical roles that partners assume in love stories.

This raises the question of whether there is, and if so, what the relationship is between love stories about the relationship and relationship satisfaction. Constructing auto-narratives shapes a specific way of thinking. It is not so much the experience itself that matters, but rather how it is processed [11]. This means that the way the narrative is shaped simultaneously shapes how one perceives close relationships. The hero (partner) may strive to realize the story they have created, and also for the relationship's reality to gradually match the story. If the constructed story speaks of difficulties in the relationship, complications in interactions with the partner, or lack of prospects for a happy shared life, the person will likely aim for an unhappy ending and thus lower satisfaction with the relationship. Similarly, narrative patterns with a positive content might shape the reality differently, raising the level of satisfaction in the relationship.

So far, research lacks an approach to relationship narratives that would both preserve the unique character of the story and capture its various aspects while allowing for a quantitative perspective. To explore what kinds of stories individuals in romantic relationships tell about their relationship with their partner, a tool for measuring them has been created: "Love Stories." The goal was to create a universal tool that would enable the identification of narratives characteristic of a particular romantic relationship from the perspective of the respondent, and to categorize these narratives about the relationship.

The "Love Stories" tool

In the initial phase of developing the tool — similarly to Sternberg's studies [4, 12] — types of love stories were identified based on analyses of oral accounts of romantic relationships and widely known contemporary sources, such as films and literature. A total of 131 monologues and 115 works of literature and films on the theme of love from 2008 to 2017 were analyzed. These were categorized according to recurring plot patterns in which the main characters assume specific roles in the relationship. Initially, an attempt was made to identify prototype stories. However, it became clear that although these stories seemed similar, they differed in details that might be crucial for the relationship. This diversity of details made categorizing the stories, though possible, overlook significant elements essential for the existence and satisfaction in the relationship. It was noted, however, that regardless of the development of the story, the attitudes of the characters, or expectations toward the partner and the relationship, certain key statements appeared repeatedly in the love stories. These pertain to the beginning of the relationship, difficulties and overcoming them, roles, and the future. This observation led the creators of the method to focus on these key recurring statements in the narratives, which are characteristic of the different stages of the relationship. In this way, narrative scripts were identified. Subsequently, a list of short narratives — statements — was created. Two

competent judges identified 312 statements for both women and men. In the next phase, their content and structure were consulted with graduates in Polish philology. Statements whose content could be interpreted in multiple ways were removed, and those with similar meanings were replaced with a single version. As a result, 261 statements were identified for the purposes of the study, referred to as “statements.” These were developed in two versions: one for women and one for men, with slight variations in content. The statements were then categorized into groups that reflect the stages of a relationship and form the pattern of its history: circumstances of meeting, beginnings of the relationship, obstacles in the relationship’s development, overcoming these obstacles, roles in the relationship, shared/individual worlds, mutual importance, development/regression/future. The collection of statements in each category for women and men can be found in Appendix 1.

Method

Study sample and procedure

The study was conducted via a website created specifically for this purpose. It received approval from the Ethics Committee of the SWPS University in Warsaw (no. 24/2019). Data were collected from June to October 2019. Participation in the study was voluntary and financially compensated. Participants were informed about the anonymity of the study and their right to withdraw from participation at any time. A total of 309 individuals (170 women and 139 men), aged between 18 and 74 years ($M = 37.41$; $SD = 12.41$), participated in the study. All participants were currently in a romantic relationship, with relationship duration ranging from a few months to 50 years ($M = 11.05$; $SD = 10.26$). Of the participants, 64.6% reported being in a formal relationship, while 35.4% were in an informal relationship. The participants completed the following questionnaires: Love Stories and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS-PL).

Tools

The “Love Stories” tool is used to study narratives in relationships. It includes 7 categories concerning romantic relationships and the relationship’s history. Each category contains between 36 and 42 statements. Participants select statements that are contentually aligned with the history and their role in the current relationship by marking the appropriate box (“agree” or “disagree”) for each statement. They can select any number of statements from each category, or choose no statements within a given category.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) [13], adapted into Polish by Marta Natora [14], includes 7 questions related to key, general aspects of relationships. Respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = never to 5 = very often/very much). A higher overall score indicates higher satisfaction with the relationship. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) of the English version of the RAS ranged from 0.86 to 0.91 [13, 15]; for the Polish version, it ranged from 0.89 to 0.92 [7, 16]. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

Results

To perform a proper analysis, the first step involved calculating descriptive statistics for the variables, taking into account gender differences in order to control for subgroup dependencies. Parametric correlation analyses were conducted to test the general relationships between the variables. Descriptive statistics results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic descriptive statistics of the studied variables along with the Shapiro-Wilk test

Gender	Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk.</i>	<i>Kurt.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>
Women (<i>N</i> = 170)	Relationship satisfaction	4.01	4.29	0.79	-1.35	1.80	1.14	5.00	0.88	<0.001
Men (<i>N</i> = 139)	Relationship satisfaction	4.08	4.14	0.68	-0.99	0.79	1.71	5.00	0.92	<0.001

M – mean; *Me* – median; *SD* – standard deviation; *Sk.* – skewness; *Kurt.* – kurtosis; *Min.* – minimum value; *Max.* – maximum value; *W* – Shapiro-Wilk test statistic; *p* – statistical significance.

To examine whether there is a relationship between the level of satisfaction in the relationship (higher or lower) and various statements in the group of women and men, exploratory analysis was performed using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. Since the distribution deviated from normality, the possibility of using the Student's t-test for independent samples was rejected. Women who selected a given statement were compared with women who did not select it in terms of the intensity of satisfaction with the relationship. Similarly, men who selected specific statements were compared with men who did not select them. Comparisons were conducted only for those statements chosen by at least 15 individuals, i.e., 15 women or 15 men. The correlation coefficient values (*r*) were calculated using the formula z/\sqrt{n} , where *z* is the standardized value of the Mann-Whitney U test, and *n* is the number of pairs of observations being compared. The correlation coefficient was used as a measure of effect size, allowing determination of whether the differences observed were large, medium, or small. Values of *r* smaller than 0.3 indicate a small effect. Values of *r* greater than 0.3 but smaller than 0.5 indicate a medium effect. Values of *r* greater than 0.5 indicate a large effect. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Significant relationships between the selection of love-related statements and the intensity of satisfaction with romantic relationships in the female group (*N* = 167)

No.	Statements	Not selected		Selected		U	<i>p</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>r</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
	1. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MEETING								
1.	I was afraid of being alone	4.08	0.72	3.72	0.99	1858.5	0.062	1.87	0.145
2.	I dreamed of a knight in shining armor	4.04	0.78	3.70	0.89	1104.5	0.065	1.85	0.143
8.	I quickly became independent	4.04	0.80	3.86	0.76	1708.5	0.089	1.70	0.132
15.	I didn't want my partner to be like my father	4.05	0.82	3.86	0.68	1965.0	0.055	1.92	0.149

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16.	I didn't want to repeat my mother's mistakes in my relationship	4.06	0.78	3.75	0.82	1457.5	0.032	2.15	0.166
19.	He was afraid of being alone	4.05	0.77	3.55	0.92	1713.5	0.036	2.10	0.163
27.	He dreamed of creating a wonderful family	3.91	0.83	4.25	0.66	2066.5	0.004	2.87	0.223
	2. THE BEGINNINGS	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
10.	It was love at first sight	3.96	0.79	4.17	0.80	1862.5	0.069	1.82	0.140
17.	He charmed me	3.93	0.80	4.13	0.79	2696.0	0.044	2.01	0.156
18.	I fell in love with him	3.92	0.79	4.08	0.80	2958.0	0.078	1.76	0.136
19.	He fell in love with me	3.88	0.83	4.12	0.75	2814.0	0.025	2.24	0.173
23.	He was warm, understanding, and heartfelt	3.90	0.85	4.10	0.73	2980.5	0.084	1.73	0.134
24.	He appreciated me	3.87	0.86	4.20	0.65	2563.0	0.008	2.67	0.207
25.	He was my great support	3.90	0.84	4.20	0.68	2500.0	0.014	2.46	0.190
33.	I felt special with him	3.82	0.83	4.24	0.68	2253.0	<0.001	3.90	0.302
34.	He accepted me for who I am	3.88	0.85	4.12	0.73	2843.5	0.032	2.14	0.166
	3. OBSTACLES	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	We had a tough period in our relationship	4.06	0.78	3.82	0.83	2082.5	0.075	1.78	0.138
5.	He strained my trust	4.11	0.72	3.50	0.96	1205.0	0.001	3.41	0.264
9.	He hurt me	4.07	0.77	3.50	1.01	996.0	0.008	2.63	0.204
14.	I still felt something was missing	4.07	0.78	3.50	0.75	772.5	0.001	3.48	0.270
17.	He didn't understand my needs	4.21	0.59	3.09	0.95	665.0	<0.001	6.02	0.466
18.	He was often absent	4.10	0.71	3.47	1.02	1104.0	0.002	2.37	0.183
21.	We had silent days	4.09	0.75	3.76	0.87	2071.5	0.025	1.33	0.103
22.	I was feeling down	4.08	0.77	3.55	0.83	1084.0	0.002	2.19	0.169
28.	Most of the responsibilities fell on me	4.12	0.73	3.66	0.89	1726.5	0.001	3.00	0.232
29.	We got stuck in routine and everyday life	4.14	0.71	3.56	0.90	1535.0	<0.001	3.89	0.301
34.	I was furious with him	4.07	0.76	3.73	0.90	1717.0	0.041	1.39	0.108
37.	He restricted me	4.07	0.73	3.32	1.10	635.0	0.004	2.70	0.209
38.	Our relationship burned out	4.12	0.66	2.88	1.08	436.0	<0.001	4.23	0.327
	4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
8.	I tried to understand him better	4.06	0.79	3.85	0.79	2206.5	0.080	2.17	0.168

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11.	We gave each other a chance	4.02	0.86	3.96	0.55	2138.5	0.085	0.41	0.032
21.	If I had given up, our relationship would have fallen apart	4.04	0.79	3.64	0.74	778.0	0.018	0.90	0.070
23.	I tried not to provoke any arguments	4.04	0.77	3.64	0.95	839.5	0.086	1.37	0.106
26.	I learned to let things go with him	4.10	0.74	3.53	0.89	1190.5	0.001	3.29	0.255
27.	Our love was stronger	3.91	0.85	4.33	0.48	1778.0	0.005	3.23	0.250
31.	We got used to each other	4.06	0.80	3.84	0.78	2096.0	0.060	1.17	0.091
32.	He gave meaning to my life	3.95	0.82	4.37	0.47	1090.5	0.029	1.07	0.083
33.	I found my other half	3.91	0.86	4.34	0.35	1789.0	0.015	1.07	0.083
34.	We adjusted to each other	3.89	0.88	4.29	0.45	2195.0	0.012	2.98	0.231
38.	It wasn't how I imagined it	4.15	0.63	2.93	1.05	490.0	<0.001	4.86	0.376
41.	My ideas about the relationship were out of touch with reality	4.09	0.74	3.22	0.87	528.5	<0.001	3.98	0.308
5. RELATIONAL ROLES		M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	I'm the bad guy and he's the good guy	4.08	0.71	3.50	1.14	1141.5	0.053	2.33	0.180
3.	I teach him how to behave	4.05	0.79	3.72	0.76	1229.5	0.023	1.56	0.121
7.	He's my motivation	3.92	0.84	4.33	0.48	1628.0	0.016	2.26	0.175
16.	I'm trying to live up to his expectations	4.03	0.80	3.77	0.73	1051.5	0.067	0.74	0.057
18.	He is my life companion	3.71	0.93	4.29	0.51	2201.0	<0.001	4.22	0.327
22.	He takes great care of the house	3.95	0.82	4.30	0.56	1425.0	0.038	0.95	0.046
25.	He is my cure for all evil	3.92	0.83	4.38	0.50	1351.0	0.003	2.91	0.225
26.	He's got more warmth than I have	3.95	0.82	4.28	0.56	1482.0	0.068	1.06	0.082
27.	He's cold	4.12	0.69	2.88	0.90	312.0	<0.001	4.90	0.379
29.	I'm a housewife	4.09	0.71	3.18	1.28	569.0	0.001	3.23	0.250
31.	I'm mothering him a little bit	4.04	0.82	3.83	0.66	1438.0	0.044	1.16	0.090
40.	Our relationship is a partnership	3.85	0.92	4.22	0.50	2778.0	0.035	1.43	0.111
41.	He's such a kid	4.09	0.73	3.35	0.97	726.5	0.001	3.46	0.268
6. SHARED/SEPARATE WORLDS		M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	We are soulmates	3.93	0.83	4.31	0.54	1565.0	0.013	3.77	0.292
2.	We live alongside one another	4.14	0.64	3.14	1.09	771.0	<0.001	4.15	0.321
4.	We live at a distance	4.04	0.78	3.73	0.88	1043.5	0.062	2.27	0.176
5.	We do a lot of things together	3.87	0.86	4.34	0.47	1961.0	0.001	3.34	0.259
7.	We don't argue	3.92	0.81	4.45	0.49	1055.5	<0.001	3.67	0.284
8.	We get along in everything	3.91	0.83	4.34	0.55	1611.5	0.002	3.31	0.256

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9.	True love unites us	3.86	0.85	4.30	0.57	2084.0	<0.001	3.55	0.275
11.	We attract each other like two distant poles	3.96	0.82	4.37	0.46	1035.5	0.029	0.76	0.059
17.	God unites and strengthens us	3.96	0.82	4.39	0.28	870.5	0.061	1.69	0.131
	7. MUTUAL IMPORTANCE	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
22.	I'd go through fire and water for him	3.91	0.84	4.36	0.45	1610.5	0.003	3.01	0.233
23.	I can't imagine my life without him	3.80	0.89	4.36	0.40	2049.5	<0.001	4.02	0.311
24.	I'm on his side	3.91	0.85	4.27	0.52	2057.5	0.022	2.51	0.194
25.	He only has eyes for me	3.95	0.82	4.32	0.57	1231.0	0.024	2.20	0.170
26.	He loves me more than life	3.88	0.83	4.39	0.52	1550.5	<0.001	4.15	0.321
27.	He'd go through fire and water for me	3.90	0.83	4.33	0.56	1715.0	0.001	3.14	0.243
28.	He can't imagine his life without me	3.89	0.86	4.33	0.43	1868.0	0.003	1.94	0.150
29.	I can always count on him	3.72	0.88	4.37	0.47	1814.5	<0.001	5.33	0.412
31.	We can't live without each other	3.88	0.84	4.46	0.38	1328.5	<0.001	4.20	0.325
32.	He gives me the best of both worlds	3.83	0.83	4.53	0.33	1126.0	<0.001	5.47	0.423
34.	He's my best friend	3.82	0.87	4.32	0.52	2101.0	<0.001	3.91	0.303
35.	I'm still attracted to him	3.84	0.88	4.23	0.59	2544.0	0.004	3.02	2.34
36.	With him I found my place on earth	3.82	0.84	4.46	0.40	1429.5	<0.001	5.11	0.395
37.	We have our rituals, symbols, places we like to go back to	3.91	0.88	4.22	0.52	2476.0	0.068	0.88	0.068
38.	He has never let me down	3.90	0.80	4.65	0.29	578.5	<0.001	5.04	0.390
	8. DEVELOPMENT/ REGRESSION/ THE FUTURE	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	The longer we are together, the better it gets	3.78	0.90	4.33	0.46	2152.5	<0.001	4.04	0.313
2.	Over time, we discovered that there's more that connects us	3.93	0.85	4.30	0.36	1783.5	0.075	0.97	0.075
18.	We will live long and happily	3.75	0.86	4.46	0.37	1456.0	<0.001	5.92	0.458
19.	We will be together until death do us part	3.85	0.85	4.43	0.39	1574.0	<0.001	4.18	0.324
22.	I am afraid I will be disappointed in him	4.08	0.79	3.33	0.45	413.5	<0.001	4.35	0.337
23.	Sometimes I wonder what my relationship with someone else would be like	4.18	0.66	3.35	0.92	1013.5	<0.001	5.15	0.399
24.	Our love will conquer everything	3.87	0.84	4.46	0.37	1362.5	<0.001	4.34	0.336

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25.	I want to spend the rest of my life with him	3.71	0.92	4.35	0.42	2015.0	<0.001	4.75	0.368
26.	In the end, it will work out for us	4.04	0.80	3.72	0.69	1010.5	0.021	1.42	0.110
27.	A difficult road lies ahead	4.08	0.75	3.55	0.93	1085.5	0.007	1.76	0.136

M – mean; SD – standard deviation; U – Mann-Whitney U test statistic; p – statistical significance; z – standardized value of the Mann-Whitney U test; r – correlation coefficient value used as a measure of effect size for the differences verified using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 3. Significant relationships between the selection of love-related statements and the intensity of satisfaction with romantic relationships in the male group (N = 137)

No.	Statements	Not selected		Selected					
	1. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MEETING	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	I was afraid of being alone	4.14	0.66	3.89	0.70	1439.0	0.046	2.00	0.171
10.	I dreamed of creating a wonderful family	4.00	0.64	4.17	0.73	1825.5	0.035	2.11	0.180
12.	I dreamed of love	3.90	0.62	4.23	0.70	1491.0	<0.001	3.66	0.313
16.	I didn't want to repeat my father's mistakes in my relationship	4.02	0.67	4.35	0.68	857.5	0.009	2.62	0.224
27.	She dreamed of creating a wonderful family	3.99	0.68	4.30	0.65	1286.5	0.003	2.99	0.255
29.	She dreamed of love	4.01	0.70	4.21	0.62	1708.5	0.097	1.66	0.142
	2. THE BEGINNINGS	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
2.	She caught my attention with her kindness	3.96	0.70	4.31	0.59	1393.0	0.002	3.11	0.266
3.	It started as a friendship	3.95	0.70	4.42	0.47	1054.5	<0.001	3.75	0.320
10.	It was love at first sight	4.01	0.69	4.33	0.59	1014.0	0.011	2.56	0.219
14.	We had a great time	3.98	0.67	4.20	0.68	1778.5	0.025	2.24	0.191
15.	I won her over	4.04	0.66	4.25	0.76	1026.5	0.037	2.09	0.179
17.	She charmed me	3.95	0.66	4.25	0.68	1550.0	0.001	3.24	0.277
18.	I fell in love with her	3.86	0.65	4.22	0.67	1412.5	<0.001	3.66	0.313
19.	She fell in love with me	3.90	0.71	4.31	0.56	1460.0	<0.001	3.67	0.314
23.	She was warm, understanding, and heartfelt	3.87	0.70	4.37	0.54	1206.0	<0.001	4.7	0.402
24.	She appreciated me	3.98	0.70	4.30	0.58	1376.5	0.007	2.68	0.229
25.	She was my great support	3.89	0.68	4.42	0.55	1041.0	<0.001	4.96	0.424

table continued on the next page

26.	Our beginnings were difficult	4.11	0.68	3.88	0.65	898.5	0.097	1.66	0.142
32.	My parents accepted her	4.01	0.68	4.21	0.68	1623.5	0.064	1.85	1.58
33.	I felt special with her	3.96	0.68	4.36	0.61	1148.0	<0.001	3.65	0.312
34.	She accepted me for who I am	3.89	0.74	4.28	0.54	1597.0	0.001	3.21	2.74
	3. OBSTACLES	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
4.	We were going through a crisis	4.19	0.61	3.58	0.74	725.0	<0.001	3.95	0.338
22.	I was feeling down	4.13	0.67	3.74	0.69	736.0	0.016	2.41	0.206
29.	We got stuck in routine and everyday life	4.13	0.69	3.76	0.57	716.0	0.006	2.78	0.238
	4. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
21.	If I had given up, our relationship would have fallen apart	4.13	0.66	3.80	0.71	934.0	0.029	2.18	0.186
27.	Our love was stronger	3.97	0.69	4.47	0.45	823.5	<0.001	3.92	0.335
28.	We grew closer to each other	3.98	0.71	4.23	0.60	1754.5	0.043	2.03	0.173
32.	She gave meaning to my life	3.98	0.69	4.43	0.53	913.0	<0.001	3.61	0.308
33.	I found my other half	3.91	0.69	4.52	0.41	809.0	<0.001	4.95	0.423
37.	She changed my outlook on life	4.01	0.69	4.35	0.58	985.5	0.012	2.52	0.215
	5. RELATIONAL ROLES	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
2.	She can slow me down, calm me down	3.97	0.72	4.41	0.39	1222.0	0.002	3.14	0.268
7.	She's my motivation	3.93	0.69	4.39	0.55	1149.0	<0.001	4.06	0.347
18.	She is my life companion	3.80	0.74	4.34	0.49	1307.0	<0.001	4.48	0.383
20.	I'm secretive and she's demonstrative	4.12	0.68	3.68	0.53	489.0	0.003	2.95	0.252
22.	She takes great care of the house	3.98	0.71	4.23	0.59	1722.0	0.035	2.10	0.197
25.	He is my cure for all evil	3.91	0.70	4.41	0.50	1120.0	<0.001	4.37	0.373
26.	She's got more warmth than I have	4.01	0.71	4.29	0.55	1289.0	0.046	2.00	1.71
40.	Our relationship is a partnership	3.87	0.70	4.37	0.52	1256.5	<0.001	4.44	0.379
	6. SHARED/SEPARATE WORLDS	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r

table continued on the next page

1.	We are soulmates	3.90	0.69	4.44	0.51	1025.5	<0.001	4.80	0.410
5.	We do a lot of things together	3.85	0.71	4.34	0.54	1314.0	<0.001	3.42	0.292
7.	We don't argue	3.98	0.69	4.59	0.31	522.5	<0.001	4.17	0.356
8.	We get along in everything	3.96	0.70	4.49	0.39	862.5	<0.001	4.03	0.344
9.	True love unites us	3.87	0.68	4.46	0.49	928.5	<0.001	5.49	0.469
10.	We share a common outlook on life	3.87	0.71	4.41	0.48	1150.5	<0.001	4.77	0.408
11.	We attract each other like two distant poles	4.00	0.69	4.50	0.42	654.0	0.001	3.38	0.289
12.	We're still getting there	4.13	0.70	3.93	0.62	1428.5	0.056	1.91	0.163
17.	God unites and strengthens us	4.01	0.69	4.43	0.52	753.5	0.003	3.01	0.257
19.	We share the same passions	4.01	0.71	4.35	0.46	1013.5	0.031	2.16	0.185
20.	We were brought together by similar problems	4.04	0.69	4.31	0.58	843.5	0.083	1.73	0.148
21.	The old married couple	3.98	0.71	4.43	0.38	948.5	0.002	3.09	0.264
	7. MUTUAL IMPORTANCE	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
22.	I'd go through fire and water for her	3.94	0.70	4.90	0.49	1061.5	<0.001	3.95	0.338
23.	I can't imagine my life without her	3.95	0.68	4.34	0.61	1252.0	<0.001	3.76	0.321
24.	I'm on her side	3.97	0.73	4.30	0.49	1523.0	0.016	2.42	0.207
25.	She only has eyes for me	4.01	0.68	4.55	0.53	434.0	<0.001	3.59	0.307
26.	She loves me more than life	3.98	0.68	4.48	0.50	758.0	<0.001	3.95	0.338
27.	She'd go through fire and water for me	3.94	0.68	4.62	0.35	517.0	<0.001	5.40	0.461
28.	She can't imagine her life without me	4.00	0.69	4.43	0.54	788.5	0.003	3.02	0.258
29.	I can always count on her	3.76	0.69	4.49	0.39	812.0	<0.001	6.52	0.557
30.	She can always count on me	3.89	0.71	4.33	0.54	1369.5	<0.001	4.03	0.344
31.	We can't live without each other	3.91	0.70	4.50	0.38	877.0	<0.001	4.84	0.414
32.	She gives me the best of both worlds	3.89	0.66	4.58	0.43	594.0	<0.001	6.11	0.522
33.	I'm giving her the best	3.94	0.69	4.46	0.50	926.0	<0.001	4.38	0.374
34.	She's my best friend	3.82	0.70	4.50	0.38	851.5	<0.001	6.04	0.516
35.	I'm still attracted to her	3.93	0.72	4.20	0.62	1812.0	0.023	2.27	0.194

table continued on the next page

36.	With her I found my place on earth	3.91	0.68	4.53	0.43	757.0	<0.001	5.21	0.445
37.	We have our rituals, symbols, places we like to go back to	3.96	0.68	4.49	0.50	780.0	<0.001	4.15	0.355
38.	She has never let me down	3.94	0.69	4.48	0.45	893.5	<0.001	4.41	0.377
	8. DEVELOPMENT/ REGRESSION/ THE FUTURE	M	SD	M	SD	U	p	z	r
1.	The longer we are together, the better it gets	3.89	0.70	4.52	0.37	830.5	<0.001	5.36	0.458
17.	I believe things will work out better for us in the future	4.16	0.68	3.66	0.50	604.0	<0.001	3.89	0.332
18.	We will live long and happily	3.90	0.71	4.36	0.52	1281.0	<0.001	4.07	0.348
19.	We will be together until death do us part	3.93	0.72	4.33	0.53	1416.0	0.001	3.40	0.290
24.	Our love will conquer everything	3.89	0.67	4.49	0.49	825.5	<0.001	5.48	0.468
25.	I want to spend the rest of my life with her	3.87	0.75	4.27	0.54	1579.0	0.001	4.55	0.389
26.	In the end, it will work out for us	4.13	0.68	3.78	0.61	763.0	0.013	2.49	0.213
27.	A difficult road lies ahead	4.12	0.68	3.82	0.67	805.5	0.049	1.97	0.168
31.	No matter what she does, I will still love her	4.03	0.69	4.30	0.57	1028.0	0.062	1.86	0.159

M – mean; SD – standard deviation; U – Mann-Whitney U test statistic; p – statistical significance; z – standardized value of the Mann-Whitney U test; r – correlation coefficient value used as a measure of effect size for the differences verified using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Women who more frequently expressed that they dreamed of creating a wonderful family had higher relationship satisfaction (compared to those who expressed this less often). They were also more likely to agree that their partner had charmed them, that they had fallen in love with each other, and that they felt accepted, appreciated, and special by their partner. They felt supported by their partner, affirmed that they had found their soulmate, that their partner gave meaning to their life, and that their love was stronger than any obstacles. They also more frequently indicated that their relationship was a partnership and that they viewed their partner as a warm, caring life companion. They more often stated that they wanted to spend the rest of their life with their partner, that their love would overcome anything, and that the longer they were together, the better their relationship became. They did many things together, got along in everything, shared true love, their partner gave them the best, and they could always rely on him. He was their best friend, and they were still attracted to him. On the other hand, they less frequently admitted to fearing being alone, dreaming of a knight in shining armor, becoming independent quickly, or that their partner also feared

loneliness. They were less likely to be concerned that their partner would resemble their father or that they would repeat their mothers' mistakes. They less often mentioned having a difficult time in their relationship, a strain on trust, and a lack of understanding from their partner regarding their needs. They also less frequently agreed with the statement that most household duties fell on them, that they had gotten stuck in a routine and daily life, or that their relationship had burned out. They also less often admitted feeling hurt, experiencing silent days in their relationship, or feeling that something was missing. They less frequently felt the need to understand their partner better, or believed that if they had given up, the relationship would have ended. They did not confirm that they had learned to let go, avoid provoking arguments, or that their expectations about the relationship were different from reality or that they had imagined it differently. They were less likely to agree that they were housewives, teaching their partner how to behave, mothering him, or trying to meet his expectations. They also less frequently described their partner as a child and admitted that they lived at a distance from each other or were simply coexisting.

Men who more frequently expressed that they dreamed of love and starting a family, did not want to repeat their father's mistakes in their relationship, and noticed similar desires in their partner, had higher relationship satisfaction (compared to men who expressed this less often). They were also more likely to indicate that their relationship began with friendship, that they had a great time together, and that their partner impressed them with her kindness. She was warm, understanding, affectionate, accepting, and offered support. They more frequently agreed that their partner could calm them down, that she was a life companion, took care of the home, and that their relationship was a partnership. They admitted that they did many things together, shared the same passions, and were like an old, married couple. Their partner was their friend. They felt that they could rely on their partner, that they were loved, and that they both gave and received the best in the relationship. They also expressed a desire to live together and confidence in the long-term stability of their relationship.

On the other hand, they less frequently admitted to fearing being alone, that their relationship had a difficult beginning, that they went through a crisis, or that they had gotten stuck in a routine. They also less frequently believed that if they gave up, their relationship would fall apart, that they were secretive while their partner was open, and that they had a difficult road ahead.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify relationship narratives characteristic of higher and lower levels of satisfaction in romantic relationships. It was found that these narratives differ based on gender. While this study is grounded in previous research [5, 7], it presents some differences. In both studies mentioned, the participants were couples, and the focus was on examining the impact of love stories on relationship satisfaction within the context of story compatibility in the relationship. These studies primarily addressed the resolution of the stories, but they did not consider the narrative structure of these stories. In contrast, the present study places the narrativity of the stories at the forefront. Since participants

created their own stories from selected statements, they were able to assign more individual meaning to them. They did not have to align their experiences with a pre-established story; rather, their experiences helped shape the narrative. Women and men who reported higher relationship satisfaction selected statements related to feelings of acceptance, support, and being in love. They dreamed of creating a wonderful family, felt appreciated, and special. They entered relationships free from the fear of loneliness. They felt that their partner was their soulmate and that their partner gave meaning to their life. They viewed the love they shared as exceptionally strong. They were less likely to admit feeling down, being stuck in the routine of everyday life, or believing that their relationship would fall apart if they gave up. They described themselves as individuals with the resources to overcome obstacles and expressed a desire for a shared future and the growth of the relationship.

What distinguishes women and men in terms of relationship satisfaction is the division of responsibilities. Women do not want to play the role of caregivers for their partners; they seek independent men. Satisfaction in a relationship is not supported when women take on the role of housewives, performing most of the household duties, or when they are restricted by their partner. On the other hand, men who reported higher relationship satisfaction emphasized the importance of reciprocity. They entered relationships with women who also wanted to create a wonderful family and who were understanding and warm. They value it when their partner knows how to calm them down.

The “Love Stories” method proposed here is suitable for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Its individual categories can be analyzed as a whole or separately. Some categories are retrospective, such as the beginnings of the relationship and the circumstances of meeting. Others focus more on how individuals understand themselves within the relationship and how they perceive their partner, such as the roles in the relationship.

This method is a tool for eliciting partners’ narratives about their relationship. The statements contained in the tables can stimulate narrative thinking about one’s relationship—the stories that individuals live by. I also see potential in applying this method in work with couples. The tool could help therapists understand how a participant experiences what is happening in their relationship.

However, the presented method has certain limitations. The development of the tool was an attempt to transition from qualitative analysis to a more universal, quantitative approach, while still preserving elements specific to relationships. This approach may overlook important nuances that affect the quality of relationships. I acknowledge that a more psychometrically valid approach would involve having participants evaluate each statement, for example, on a Likert scale indicating how well each statement reflects their relationship story, with options such as: “it describes me,” “it does not describe me,” or “it somewhat describes me/does not describe me.” However, attention must be paid to the comprehensiveness of the tool and the cognitive and emotional burden resulting from recalling autobiographical memories. Such an approach could not only impose an additional cognitive load due to the need for further analysis of each statement, but it could also distract participants from thinking narratively about their relationship.

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APPENDIX 1.

LOVE STORIES TOOL

Anna Papińska & Dariusz Kuncewicz

Select all statements that apply to your current relationship.
Place a checkmark in the box next to the selected items.

Table 1			
SHE – CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MEETING		HE – CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MEETING	
1	I was afraid of being alone	I was afraid of being alone	
2	I dreamed of a knight in shining armor	I dreamed of a princess	
3	I wanted to cut off from my family	I wanted to cut off from my family	
4	I wasn't looking for a knight in shining armor	I wasn't looking for a princess	
5	I was running from the past	I was running away from the past	
6	I was at a crossroads in life	I was at a turning point in my life	
7	I wanted to meet someone who wouldn't hurt me	I wanted to meet someone who wouldn't hurt me	
8	I quickly became independent	I quickly became independent	
9	I was seeking acceptance	I was seeking acceptance	
10	I dreamed of creating a wonderful family	I dreamed of creating a wonderful family	
11	I was seeking security	I was seeking security	
12	I dreamed of love	I dreamed of love	
13	I was scarred by a previous relationship	I was scarred by a previous relationship	
14	I didn't want my relationship to be like my parents' relationship	I didn't want my relationship to be like my parents' relationship	
15	I didn't want my partner to be like my father	I didn't want my partner to be like my mother	
16	I didn't want to repeat my mother's mistakes in my relationship	I didn't want to repeat my father's mistakes in my relationship	
17	I had a baggage of experiences	I had baggage of experiences	
18	I needed support	I needed support	
19	He was afraid of being alone	She was afraid of being alone	
20	He dreamed of a princess	She dreamed of a knight in shining armor	
21	He wanted to cut ties with his family	She wanted to cut ties with her family	
22	He was running from the past	She was running away from the past	

table continued on the next page

23	He was at a turning point in her life		She was at a turning point in her life	
24	He wanted to meet someone who wouldn't hurt him		She wanted to meet someone who wouldn't hurt her	
25	He quickly became independent		She quickly became independent	
26	He was seeking acceptance		She was seeking acceptance	
27	He dreamed of creating a wonderful family		She dreamed of creating a wonderful family	
28	He was seeking security		She was seeking security	
29	He dreamed of love		She dreamed of love	
30	He was scarred by a previous relationship		She was scarred by her previous relationship	
31	He didn't want me to be like his mother		She didn't want me to be like her father	
32	He had a baggage of experiences		She had baggage of experiences	
33	He needed support		She needed support	

Table 2

SHE – THE BEGINNINGS		HE – THE BEGINNINGS	
1	It was supposed to be without commitments		It was supposed to be without commitments
2	He caught my attention with his kindness		She caught my attention with her kindness
3	It started as a friendship		It started as a friendship
4	He lifted me out of a slump		She lifted me out of a slump
5	He pursued me		She pursued me
6	I pursued him		I pursued her
7	It just happened		It just happened
8	I was engulfed by his world		I was engulfed by her world
9	I was afraid to trust him		I was afraid to trust her
10	It was love at first sight		It was love at first sight
11	He wasn't my type		She wasn't my type
12	We were from two different worlds		We were from two different worlds
13	It was idyllic		It was idyllic
14	We had a great time		We had a great time
15	I won him over		I won her over
16	He won me over		She won me over
17	He charmed me		She charmed me
18	I fell in love with him		I fell in love with her
19	He fell in love with me		She fell in love with me

table continued on the next page

20	He was a catch		She was a catch	
21	From the beginning, our relationship was very intense		From the beginning, our relationship was very intense	
22	He sacrificed for me		She sacrificed for me	
23	He was warm, understanding, and heartfelt		She was warm, understanding, and heartfelt	
24	He appreciated me		She appreciated me	
25	He was my great support		She was my great support	
26	Our beginnings were difficult		Our beginnings were difficult	
27	There was no spark, no fire		There was no spark, no fire	
28	It was hard for us to fit together		It was hard for us to fit together	
29	We met as opposites		We met as opposites	
30	He didn't appeal to my parents		She didn't appeal to my parents	
31	Our families hold different values		Our families hold different values	
32	My parents accepted him		My parents accepted her	
33	I felt special with him		I felt special with her	
34	He accepted me for who I am		She accepted me for who I am	
Table 3				
SHE – OBSTACLES		HE – OBSTACLES		
1	We had a tough period in our relationship		We had a tough period in our relationship	
2	A certain event thwarted our plans		A certain event thwarted our plans	
3	We lived together like cats and dogs		We lived together like cats and dogs	
4	We were going through a crisis		We were going through a crisis	
5	He strained my trust		She strained my trust	
6	He cheated on me		She cheated on me	
7	I let him down		I let her down	
8	He dragged me down		She dragged me down	
9	He hurt me		She hurt me	
10	His previous relationship cast a shadow over ours		Her previous relationship cast a shadow over ours	
11	My previous relationship cast a shadow over ours		My previous relationship cast a shadow over ours	
12	He left me		She left me	
13	He deceived me		She deceived me	
14	I still felt something was missing		I still felt something was missing	
15	His work situation changed		Her work situation changed	

table continued on the next page

16	My work situation changed		My work situation changed	
17	He didn't understand my needs		She didn't understand my needs	
18	He was often absent		She was often absent	
19	I got involved in an affair		I got involved in an affair	
20	He escaped into work		She escaped into work	
21	We had silent days		We had silent days	
22	I was feeling down		I was feeling down	
23	Something inside me broke		Something inside me broke	
24	It was hard for us to build a good relationship		It was hard for us to build a good relationship	
25	I couldn't give him what he dreamed of		I couldn't give her what she dreamed of	
26	I found myself trapped		I found myself trapped	
27	I left him		I left her	
28	Most of the responsibilities fell on me		Most of the responsibilities fell on me	
29	We got stuck in routine and everyday life		We got stuck in routine and everyday life	
30	The relationship was a test of strength, a struggle with each other		The relationship was a test of strength, a struggle with each other	
31	The children turned out to be more important to him than I was		The children turned out to be more important to her than I was	
32	I missed him		I missed her	
33	I was jealous		I was jealous	
34	I was furious with him		I was furious with her	
35	He became dependent on me		She became dependent on me	
36	I became dependent on him		I became dependent on her	
37	He restricted me		She restricted me	
38	Our relationship burned out		Our relationship burned out	
39	I stopped caring about him		I stopped caring about her	
40	He stopped caring about me		She stopped caring about me	
41	He was looking at other women		She was looking at other men	

Table 4

SHE – OVERCOMING OBSTACLES		HE – OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	
1	For the sake of our relationship, I sacrificed my own needs		For the sake of our relationship, I sacrificed my own needs
2	We waited out conflicts until the next argument		We waited out conflicts until the next argument
3	I tried to win him back		I tried to win her back

table continued on the next page

4	He started working on himself	She started working on herself	
5	He apologized to me	She apologized to me	
6	I apologized to him	I apologized to her	
7	We compromised	We compromised	
8	I tried to understand him better	I tried to understand her better	
9	I forgave him	I forgave her	
10	He forgave me	She forgave me	
11	We gave each other a chance	We gave each other a chance	
12	We had to overcome many adversities	We had to overcome many adversities	
13	I treated the relationship as a life challenge	I treated the relationship as a life challenge	
14	I decided to fight for our relationship	I decided to fight for our relationship	
15	We made a deal	We made a deal	
16	I tried to reconcile quickly to prevent long-lasting quarrels	I tried to reconcile quickly to prevent long-lasting quarrels	
17	I didn't want to see the bad things in our relationship	I didn't want to see the bad things in our relationship	
18	I recognized my mistake	I recognized my mistake	
19	I resigned myself to fate	I resigned myself to fate	
20	I took the initiative	I took the initiative	
21	If I had given up, our relationship would have fallen apart	If I had given up, our relationship would have fallen apart	
22	I provoked arguments	I provoked arguments	
23	I tried not to provoke any arguments	I tried not to provoke any arguments	
24	It was all just a show, pretending	It was all just a show, pretending	
25	We overcame the crisis	We overcame the crisis	
26	I learned to let things go with him	I learned to let things go with her	
27	Our love was stronger	Our love was stronger	
28	We grew closer to each other	We grew closer to each other	
29	There were many issues I wouldn't have resolved without him	There were many issues I wouldn't have resolved without her	
30	I expected him to make up for that time	I expected her to make up for that time	
31	We got used to each other	We got used to each other	
32	He gave meaning to my life	She gave meaning to my life	
33	I found my other half	I found my other half	
34	We adjusted to each other	We adjusted to each other	
35	He changed for me	She changed for me	

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36	I changed for him		I changed for her	
37	He changed my outlook on life		She changed my outlook on life	
38	It wasn't how I imagined it		It wasn't how I imagined it	
39	It wasn't thrilling		It wasn't thrilling	
40	I broke down		I broke down	
41	My ideas about the relationship were out of touch with reality		My ideas about the relationship were out of touch with reality	
42	A child came into the picture		A child came into the picture	

Table 5

SHE – RELATIONAL ROLES		HE – RELATIONAL ROLES	
1	I'm the bad guy and he's the good guy	I'm the bad guy and she's the good guy	
2	He can slow me down, calm me down	She can slow me down, calm me down	
3	I teach him how to behave	I teach her how to behave	
4	I'm the engine of the relationship	I'm the engine of the relationship	
5	I'm planning, he's implementing	I'm planning, she's making it happen	
6	He plans, I carry out	She plans, I carry out	
7	He's my motivation	She's my motivation	
8	He gets me	She gets me	
9	His problems fill up our relationship	Her problems fill up our relationship	
10	He's like mommy's boy	She's like daddy's girl	
11	He is the one who keeps his feet on the ground	She is the one who keeps her feet on the ground	
12	I'm happy to pass the baton to him	I'm happy to pass the baton to her	
13	He clings to me	She clings to me	
14	I fasten on to him	I fasten on to her	
15	He is the one who plays the first fiddle	She plays the first fiddle	
16	I'm trying to live up to his expectations	I'm trying to live up to her expectations	
17	I'm showing him a window to the world	I'm showing her a window to the world	
18	He is my life companion	She is my life companion	
19	He's secretive and I'm demonstrative	She's secretive and I'm demonstrative	
20	I'm secretive and he's demonstrative	I'm secretive and she's demonstrative	
21	I'm keeping it all together	I'm keeping it all together	
22	He takes great care of the house	She takes great care of the house	
23	He's more resourceful than I am	She's more resourceful than I am	
24	He had a difficult childhood	She had a difficult childhood	

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25	He is my cure for all evil	He is my cure for all evil	
26	He's got more warmth than I have	She's got more warmth than I have	
27	He's cold	She's cold	
28	If I don't yell at him, he won't get a grip	If I don't yell at her, she won't get a grip	
29	I'm a housewife	She's a housewife	
30	He's a henpacked husband	I'm a henpacked husband	
31	I'm mothering him a little bit	I'm kind of being mothered	
32	I'm the one wearing the pants in this relationship	I'm the one wearing the pants in this relationship	
33	I'm trying to change it my way	I'm trying to change it my way	
34	I'm the one who has the final say	I'm the one who has the final say	
35	He is the one who has the final say	She is the one who has the final say	
36	He's a bit of a Peter Pan	I'm a bit of a Peter Pan	
37	He's got a little bit of a macho feel	I've got a little bit of that macho	
38	He's the head of the family and I'm the neck	I'm the head of the family and she's the neck	
39	He would like patriarchy	She would like a matriarchy	
40	Our relationship is a partnership	Our relationship is a partnership	
41	He's such a kid	She's such a kid	

Table 6

SHE – SHARED/SEPARATE WORLDS		HE – SHARED/SEPARATE WORLDS	
1	We are soulmates	We are soulmates	
2	We live alongside one another	We live alongside one another	
3	We are from two different worlds	We are from two different worlds	
4	We live at a distance	We live at a distance	
5	We do a lot of things together	We do a lot of things together	
6	We don't have much in common	We don't have much in common	
7	We don't argue	We don't argue	
8	We get along in everything	We get along in everything	
9	True love unites us	True love unites us	
10	We share a common outlook on life	We share a common outlook on life	
11	We attract each other like two distant poles	We attract each other like two distant poles	
12	We're still getting there	We're still getting there	
13	Staying united despite all adversity	Staying united despite all adversity	

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14	We can't live with or without each other		We can't live with or without each other	
15	We are connected by the upbringing of children		We are connected by the upbringing of children	
16	We are closer due to caring for animals		We are closer due to caring for animals	
17	God unites and strengthens us		God unites and strengthens us	
18	We share workplace		We share workplace	
19	We share the same passions		We share the same passions	
20	We were brought together by similar problems		We were brought together by similar problems	
21	The old married couple		The old married couple	
SHE – MUTUAL IMPORTANCE		HE – MUTUAL IMPORTANCE		
22	I'd go through fire and water for him		I'd go through fire and water for her	
23	I can't imagine my life without him		I can't imagine my life without her	
24	I'm on his side		I'm on her side	
25	He only has eyes for me		She only has eyes for me	
26	He loves me more than life		She loves me more than life	
27	He'd go through fire and water for me		She'd go through fire and water for me	
28	He can't imagine his life without me		She can't imagine her life without me	
29	I can always count on him		I can always count on her	
30	He can always count on me		She can always count on me	
31	We can't live without each other		We can't live without each other	
32	He gives me the best of both worlds		She gives me the best of both worlds	
33	I'm giving him the best		I'm giving her the best	
34	He's my best friend		She's my best friend	
35	I'm still attracted to him		I'm still attracted to her	
36	With him I found my place on earth		With her I found my place on earth	
37	We have our rituals, symbols, places we like to go back to		We have our rituals, symbols, places we like to go back to	
38	He has never let me down		She has never let me down	
Table 7				
SHE – DEVELOPMENT/REGRESSION/THE FUTURE		HE – DEVELOPMENT/REGRESSION/THE FUTURE		
1	The longer we are together, the better it gets		The longer we are together, the better it gets	
2	Over time, we discovered that there's more that connects us		Over time, we discovered that there's more that connects us	

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3	Over time, we started to resemble each other	Over time, we started to resemble each other	
4	He gradually fell in love with me	She gradually fell in love with me	
5	We broke up and got back together	We broke up and got back together	
6	He changed for the better	She changed for the better	
7	From hate to love	From hate to love	
8	The longer we are together, the worse it gets	The longer we are together, the worse it gets	
9	There was a gradual breakup	There was a gradual breakup	
10	The problem kept escalating	The problem kept escalating	
11	We kept breaking up and getting back together	We kept breaking up and getting back together	
12	He changed for the worse	She changed for the worse	
13	Nothing changed, always the same	Nothing changed, always the same	
14	From love to hate	From love to hate	
15	I'd rather not think about our future	I'd rather not think about our future	
16	I am afraid I will lose him	I am afraid I will lose her	
17	I believe things will work out better for us in the future	I believe things will work out better for us in the future	
18	We will live long and happily	We will live long and happily	
19	We will be together until death do us part	We will be together until death do us part	
20	I am afraid it will all come to an end	I am afraid it will all come to an end	
21	I am afraid he will be disappointed in me	I am afraid he will be disappointed in me	
22	I am afraid I will be disappointed in him	I am afraid I will be disappointed in her	
23	Sometimes I wonder what my relationship with someone else would be like	Sometimes I wonder what my relationship with someone else would be like	
24	Our love will conquer everything	Our love will conquer everything	
25	I want to spend the rest of my life with him	I want to spend the rest of my life with her	
26	In the end, it will work out for us	In the end, it will work out for us	
27	A difficult road lies ahead	A difficult road lies ahead	
28	It won't be thrilling	It won't be thrilling	
29	We will work it out	We will work it out	
30	Our relationship might not survive	Our relationship might not survive	
31	No matter what he does, I will still love him	No matter what she does, I will still love her	