

The seal of Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a sunburst and a cross. The shield is surrounded by a ring of smaller shields. The outer border of the seal contains Latin text: "FRIEDRICH-SCHILLER-UNIVERSITÄT JENA" at the top, "COEPT-DOCERE" on the right, "ELECT-SAXON" at the bottom, and "THVR-ALPHIO" on the left. The text "MISNI + IOHAN:" is also visible at the top.

Personality Effects on Partner Relationships

Franz J. Neyer

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

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Overview

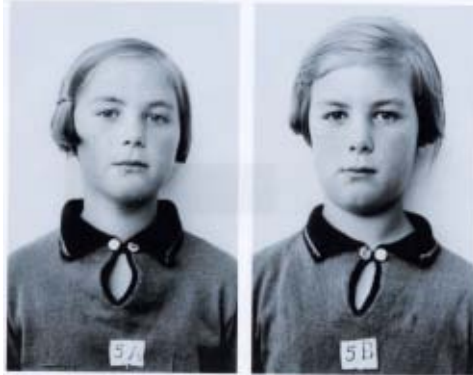
- 1. Personality does Matter.**
- 2. Personality Effects on Partner Relationships.**
 - **Domain-specific approaches, e.g. PACT**
 - **Adaptive Processes, e.g. RIB**
- 3. Practice: Partner Matching.**
- 4. Conclusions.**



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Why does Personality matter?

MZ twins



DZ twins



Personality matters.

Personality effects.

- PACT
- RIB

Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Personality effects

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Personality

Personality matters.

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Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Personality => set of individual characteristics in physical appearance, behavior, and experience.

Implications:

- 1. Idiosyncrasy (compared to others in a reference group).**
- 2. Moderate stability over time.**



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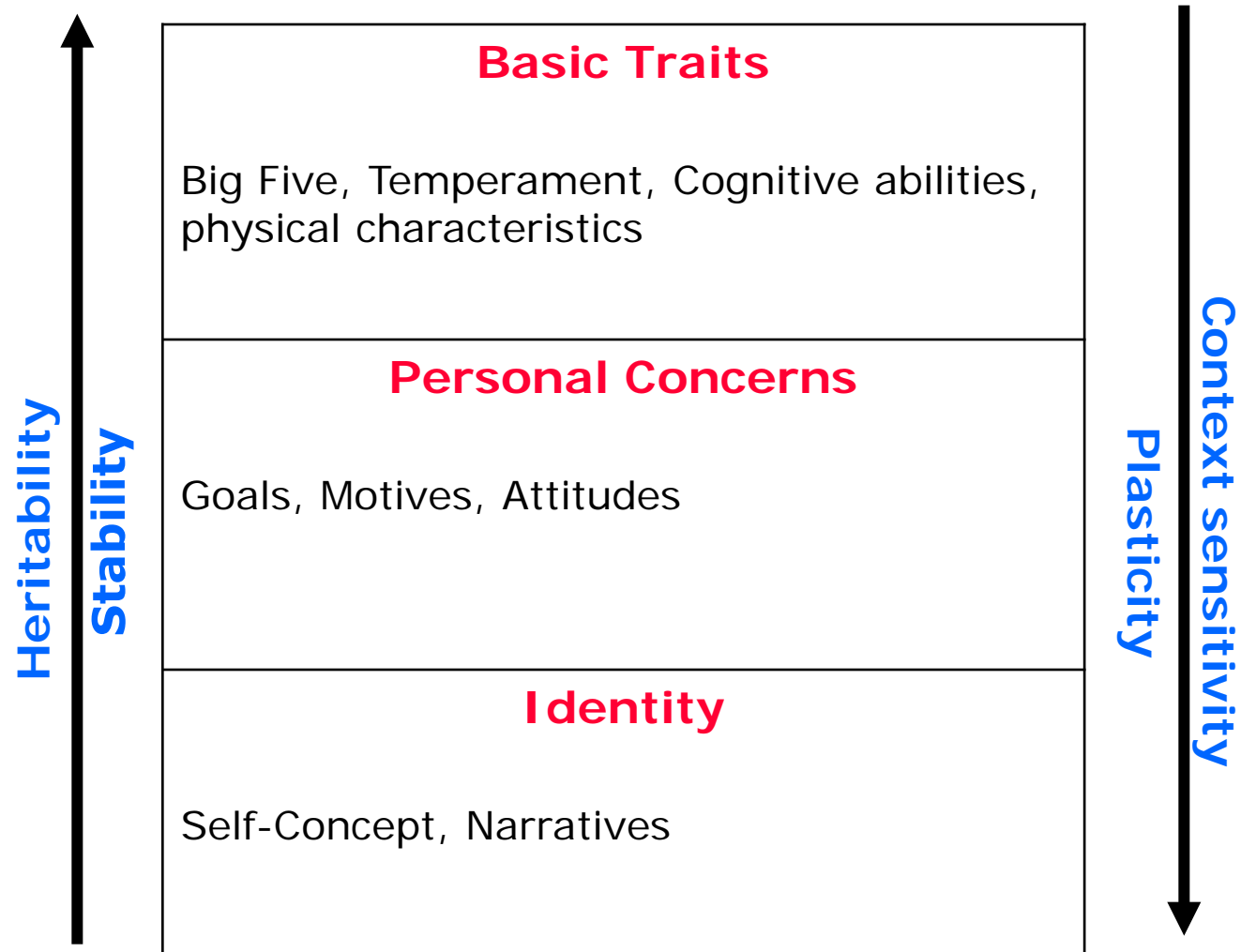
Personality matters.

Personality effects.

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Partner Matching.

Conclusions.



Personality effects

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McAdams (1996), McCrae & Costa (1999).



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Personality and Environment

Personality matters.

Personality effects.

- PACT
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Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Objective Situations vs. Personal Environments

Personal Environment => stable set of exposures to situations (including physical environment)

Implications:

1. Personal environments may be “artifacts” of personality.

2. Thus, personality-environment correlations are mostly ambiguous (e.g., correlations of personality with social support).



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Personality and Partner Relationships

Personality matters.

Personality effects.

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Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Partnership => Two Personalities, One Relationship

Implications:

- 1. Partner relationship can be considered as part of personality + environment.**
- 2. Characteristics of partner relationships are less stable than personality traits.**
- 3. Personality effects on partner relationships are more likely to emerge or to become stronger than vice verse.**

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Personality matters!

Personality matters.

Personality effects.

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Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Personality traits predict important life outcomes to the same extent as IQ and SES (sometimes even better).

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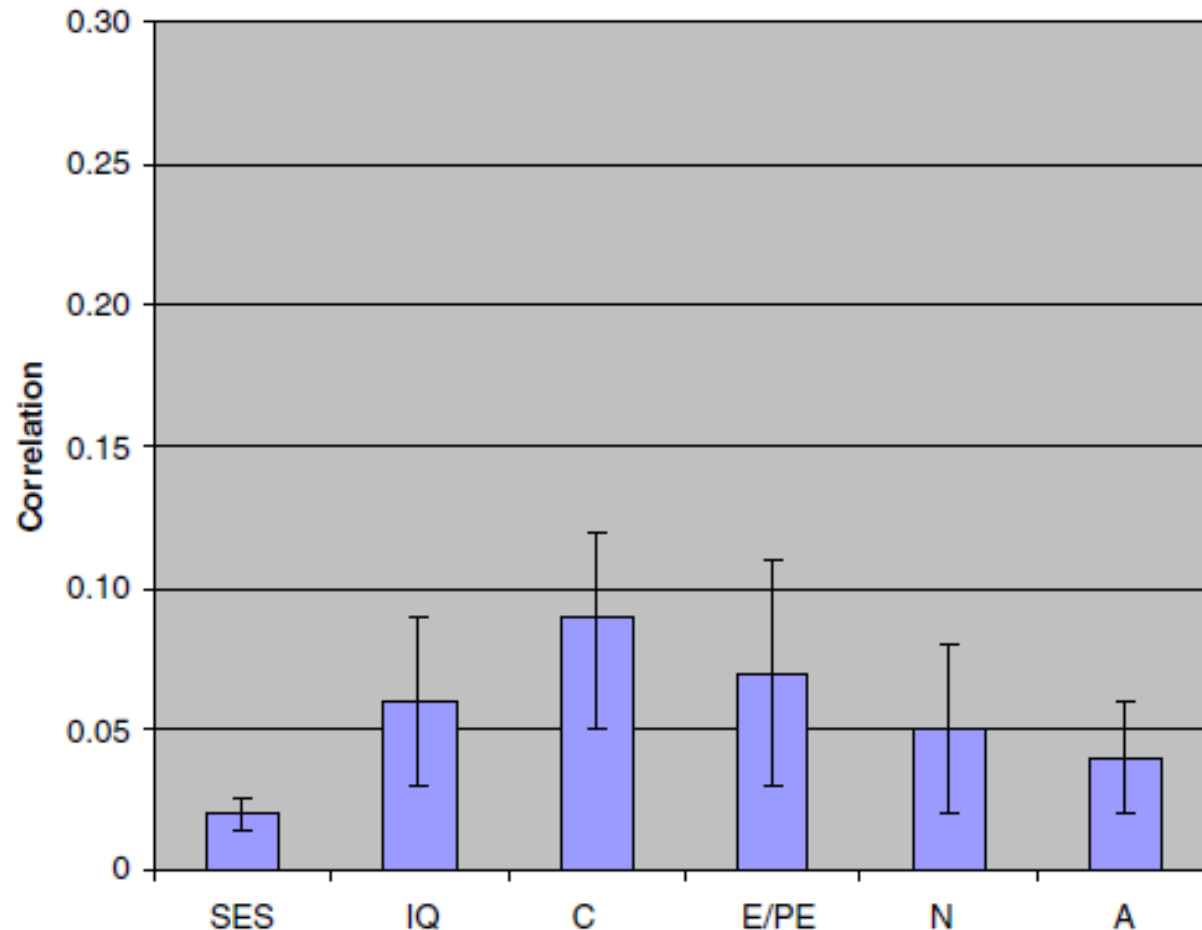
Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

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Long-term Effects on Mortality



Average effects (67 longitudinal studies) of low socioeconomic status (SES), low IQ, low Conscientiousness (C), low Extraversion/Positive Emotion (E/PE), Neuroticism (N), and low Agreeableness (A) on mortality.

Roberts et al. (2007). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.



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Personality matters.

Personality effects.

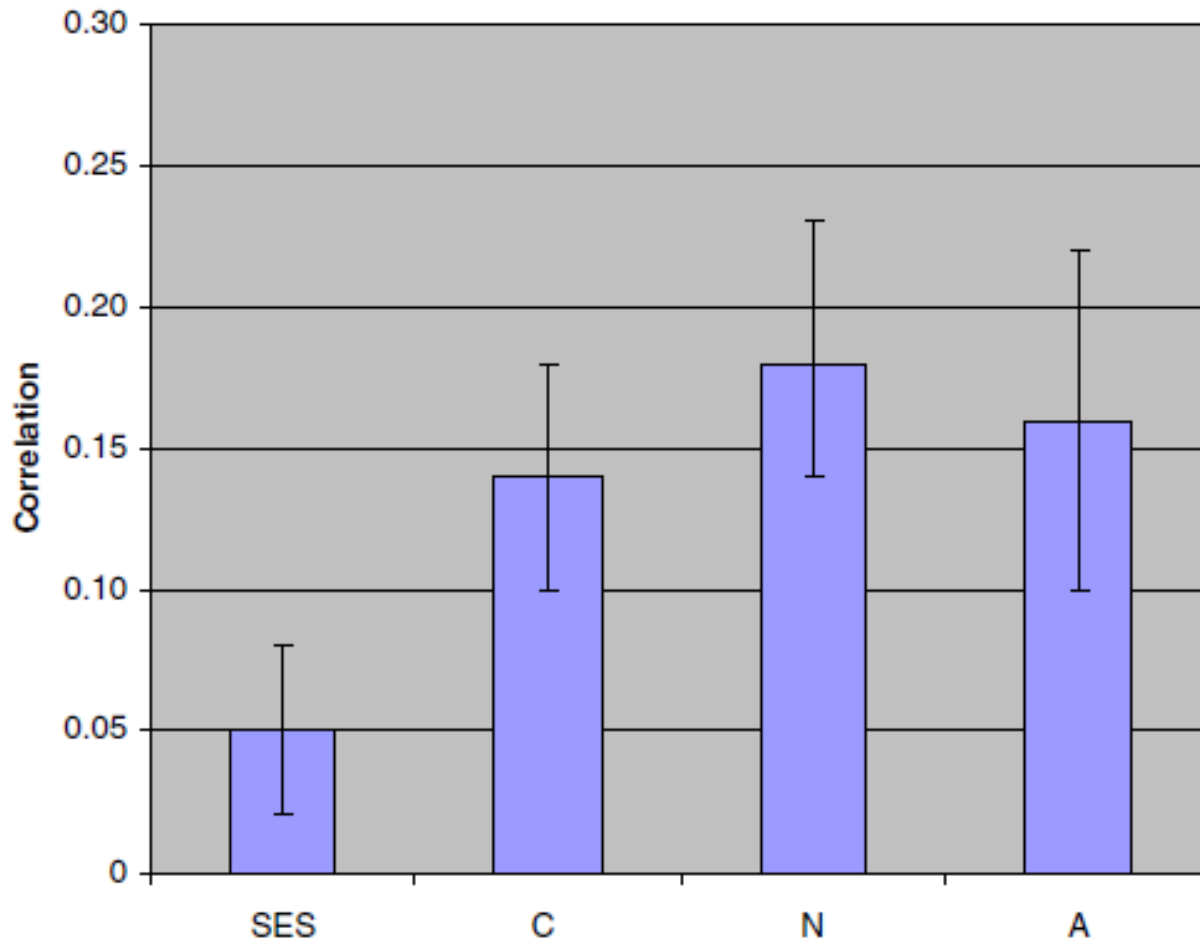
- PACT

- RIB

Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Long-term Effects on Divorce



Average effects (24 longitudinal studies) of low socioeconomic status (SES), low Conscientiousness (C), Neuroticism (N), and low Agreeableness (A).

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Personality matters.

Personality effects.

- PACT

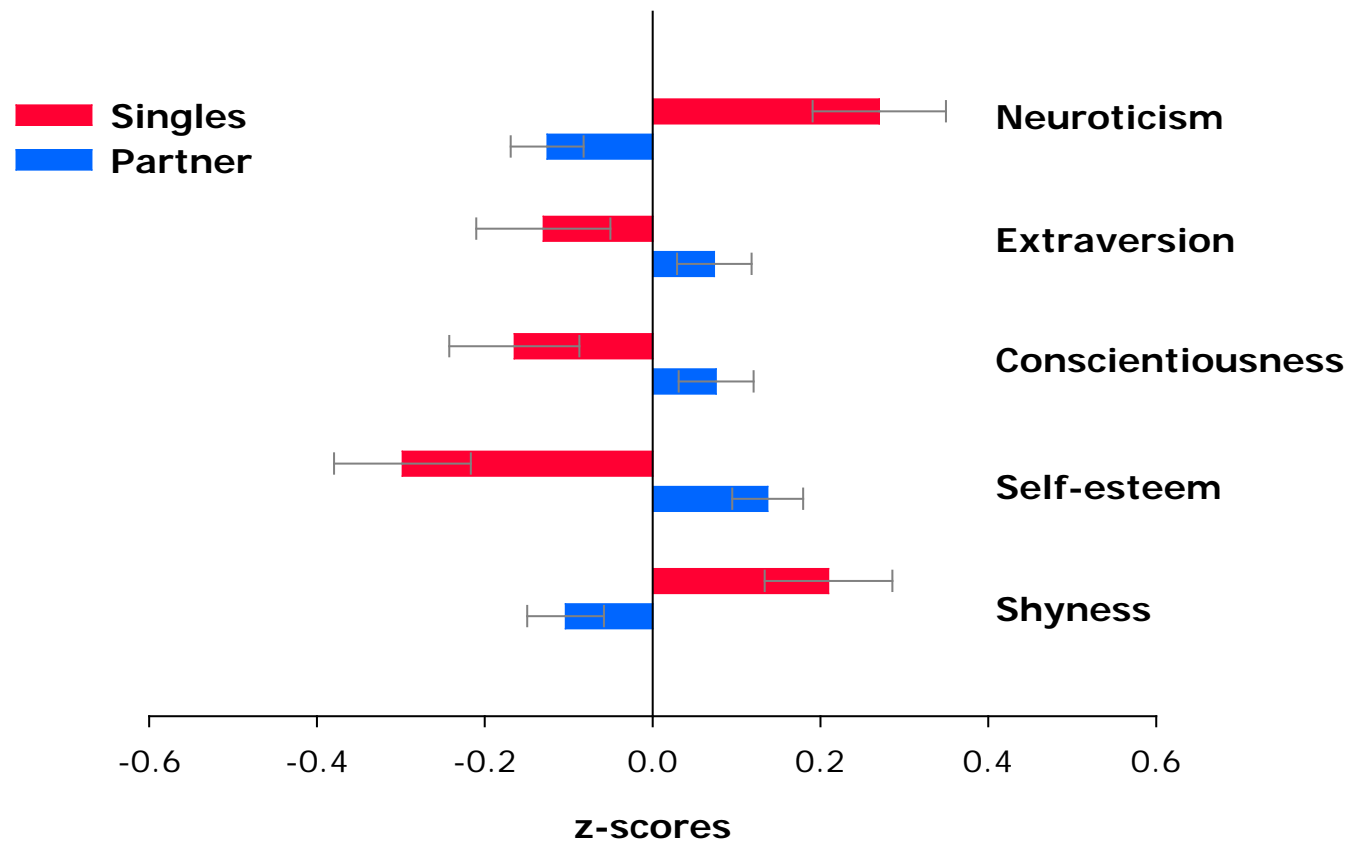
- RIB

Partner Matching.

Conclusions.

Personality matters

Not having a partner is associated with a less socially desirable personality profile (at least in young adults)!



Personality effects

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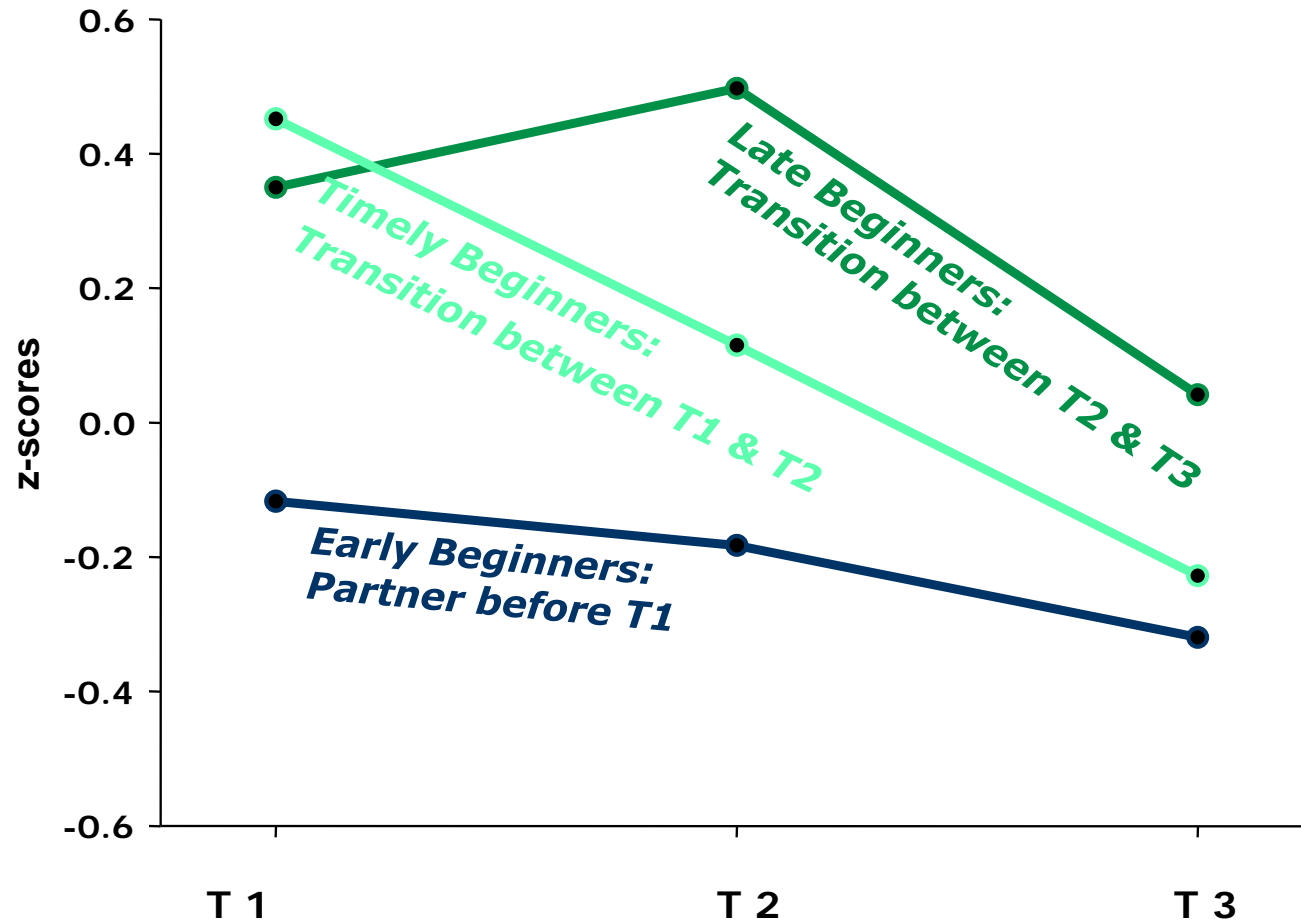
Neyer (1999). *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie & Sozialpsychologie*.



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Natural Experiment: First Partner Relationships

Engaging in a partner relationship for the first time is associated with decreasing neuroticism!

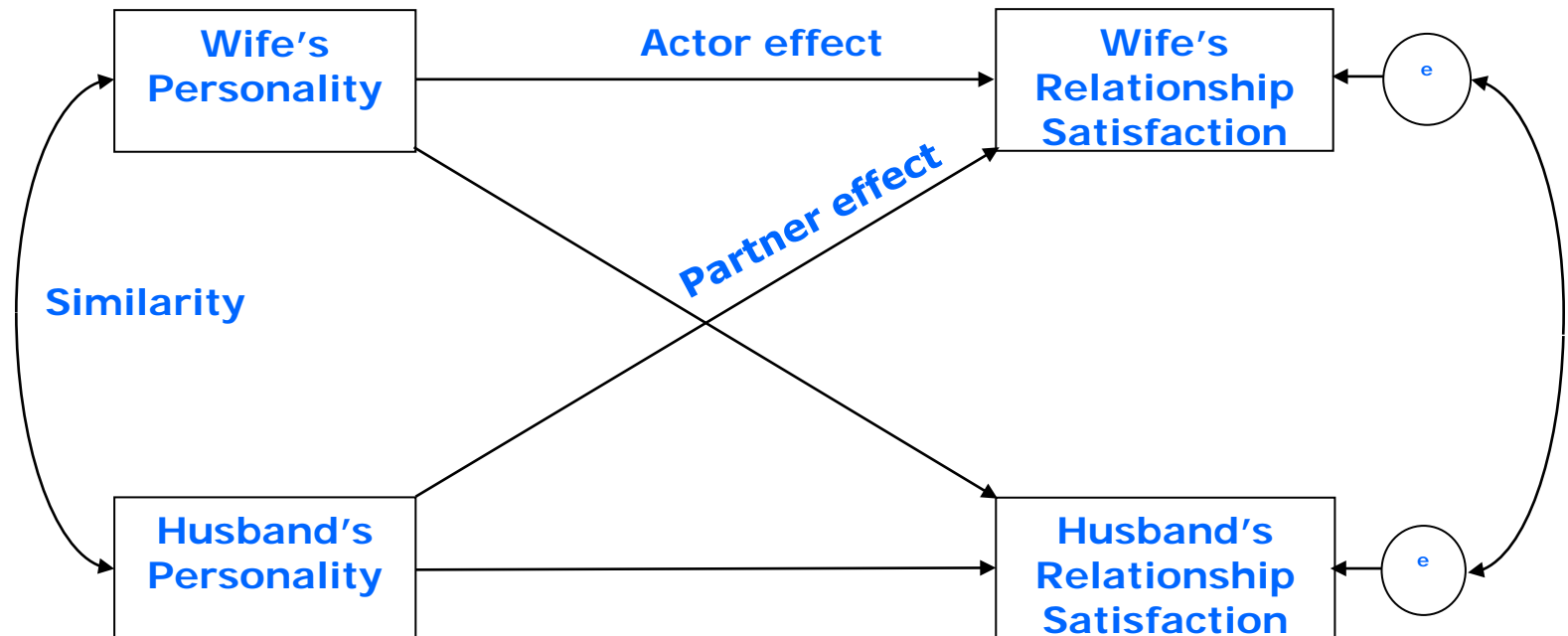


Neyer & Asendorpf (2001). *JPSP*. Neyer & Lehnart (2007). *J of Personality*.
Lehnart, Neyer & Eccles (2010). *Journal of Personality* (Replication with
Michigan Study of Adolescent and Adult Life Transitions, MSALT).

Personality effects on Relationship Satisfaction

Two Questions:

1. Personality effects on one's own and on partner's relationship satisfaction (actor and partner effects).
2. Similarity effects on relationship satisfaction.





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Personality effects on Relationship Satisfaction

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Conclusions.

Replicable (cross-sectional) effects of BIG FIVE across survey data from Australia (HILDA), U.K. (BHPS) and Germany (SOEP) (Dyrenforth et al. 2010; *JPSP*):

1. **Actor effects** account for 6% of relationship satisfaction variance (compared to 10-16% of variance in life satisfaction).
2. **Partner effects** explain approx. 3% of variance in relationship satisfaction (compared to approx. 2% in life satisfaction).
3. **Similarity effects** account for 0.5% of variance in relationship + life satisfaction (controlling for actor and partner effects!).



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Personality effects on Relationship Satisfaction

Conclusion:

Basic traits yield small effects, probably due to bandwidth-fidelity dilemma.

Alternatives:

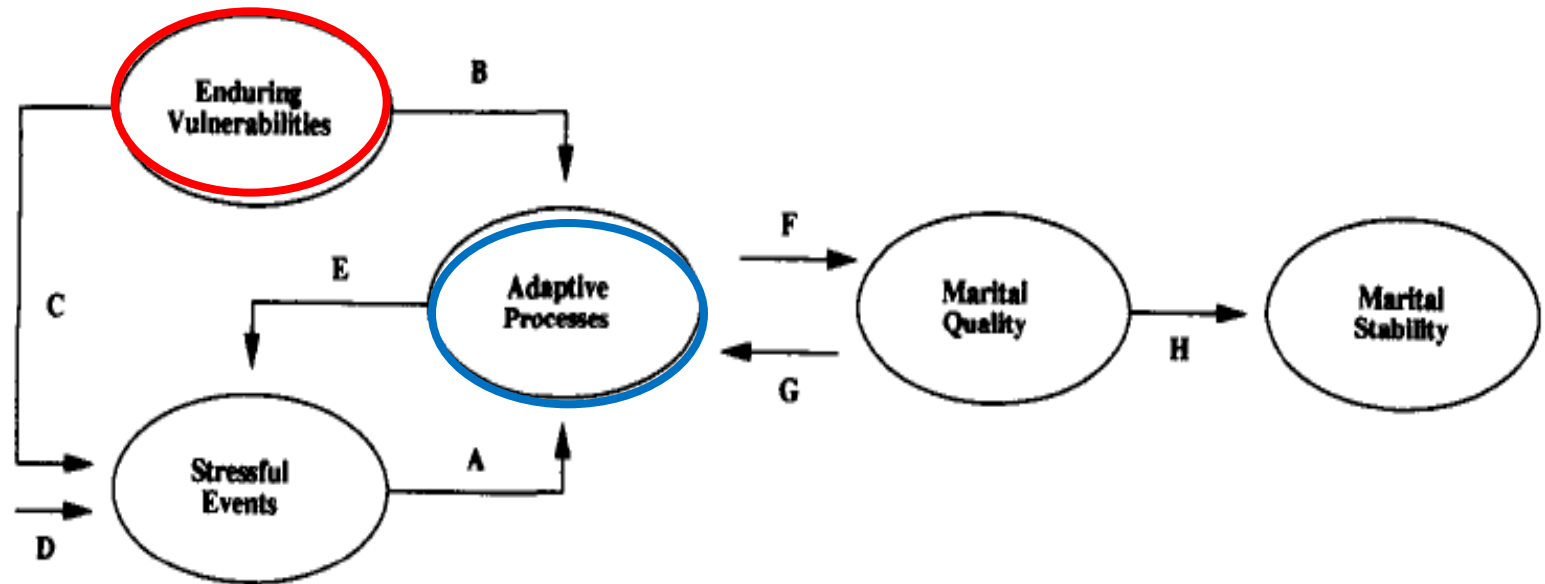
- 1. Investigating domain-specific traits**
- 2. Looking at adaptive processes**



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Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model by Karney and Bradbury (1995)

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Karney & Bradbury (1995). *Psychological Bulletin*



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Illustration: **Partner-Related Agency & Communion Test/PACT**

PACT measures implicit agentic and communal needs in partner relationships

Partner-related communal need:

Recurrent concern for closeness (physical/emotional) to one's partner and for experience of the self as part of a dyad.

Partner-related agentic need:

Recurrent concern for experience of confirming the self as an independent and capable individual.

Measurement approach:

Picture Story Exercises (PSE) (variants of the Thematic Apperception Test, TAT)

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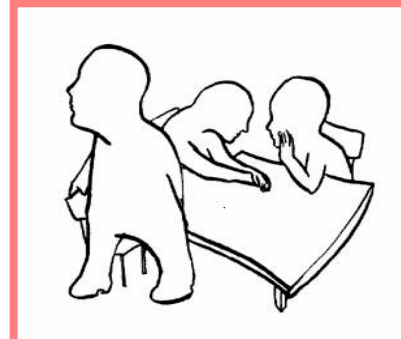
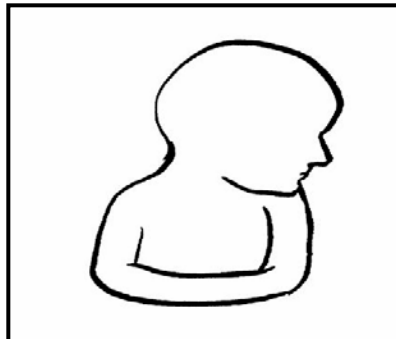
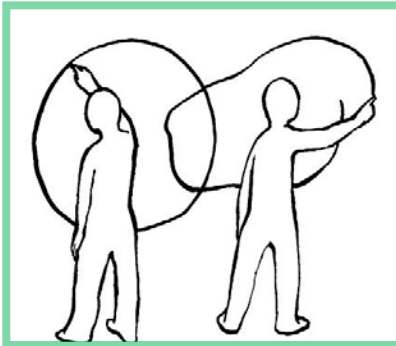
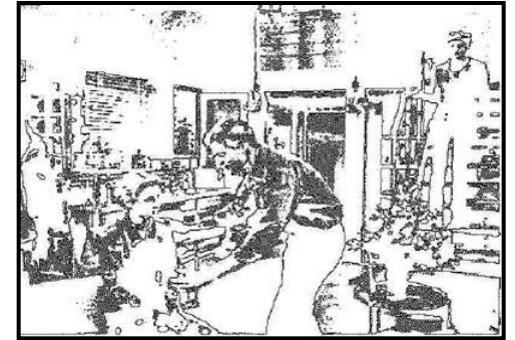
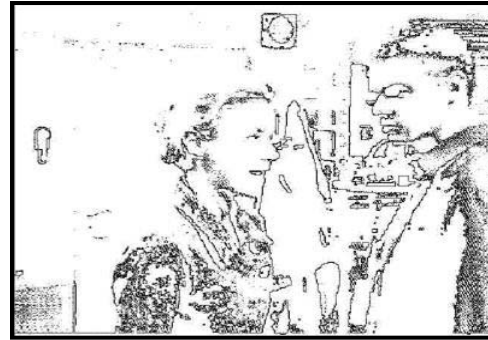
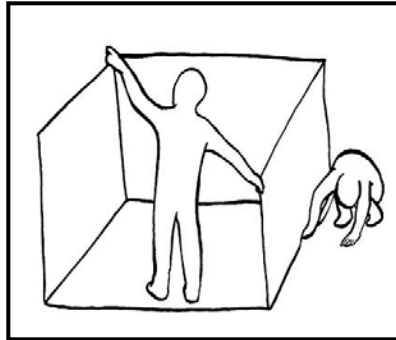
PACT Materials

Pictures adapted from the Operant Motive Test (Kuhl & Scheffer, 1999)

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Conclusions.



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Hagemeyer & Neyer (in press.) *Psychological Assessment*.



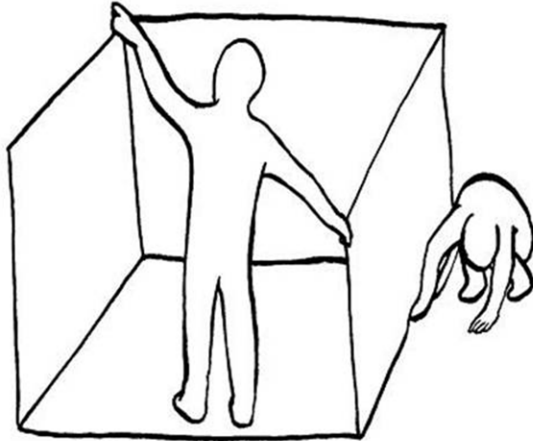
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PACT Assessment

Personality matters.
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Partner Matching.
Conclusions.

Please make up a story which further describes this scene. Your story should refer to romantic partner relationships and the protagonist of your story is supposed to be one of the partners. Please indicate your protagonist first and then answer the following three questions on the basis of your story.



Please indicate the protagonist of your story in the picture.

.....

What is important to this person in this situation and what is he/she doing?

.....

How is the person feeling in this situation and how are his/her feelings for his/her partner?

.....

Why is the person feeling this way?

.....

8 picture-story tasks

Quantitative content analysis of test answers

Personality effects
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Hagemeyer & Neyer (in press.) *Psychological Assessment*.



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PACT Codings

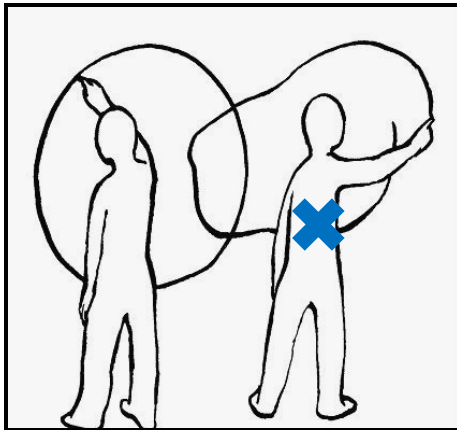
Personality matters.
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Conclusions.



Emotional
Closeness

Differen-
tiation

What is important to this person in this situation, and what is he/she doing?

She is trying to paint something that suits the circle and still makes the wall painting look more colorful and creative.

How is the person feeling in this situation, and how are his/her feelings for his/her partner?

Love for her partner and joy in the activity

Why is the person feeling this way?

Because she's creating something she likes, even though her partner is doing something different. And because she's with her partner.

pnAgency = 1 pnCommunion = 1

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Hagemeyer & Neyer (in press.) *Psychological Assessment*.



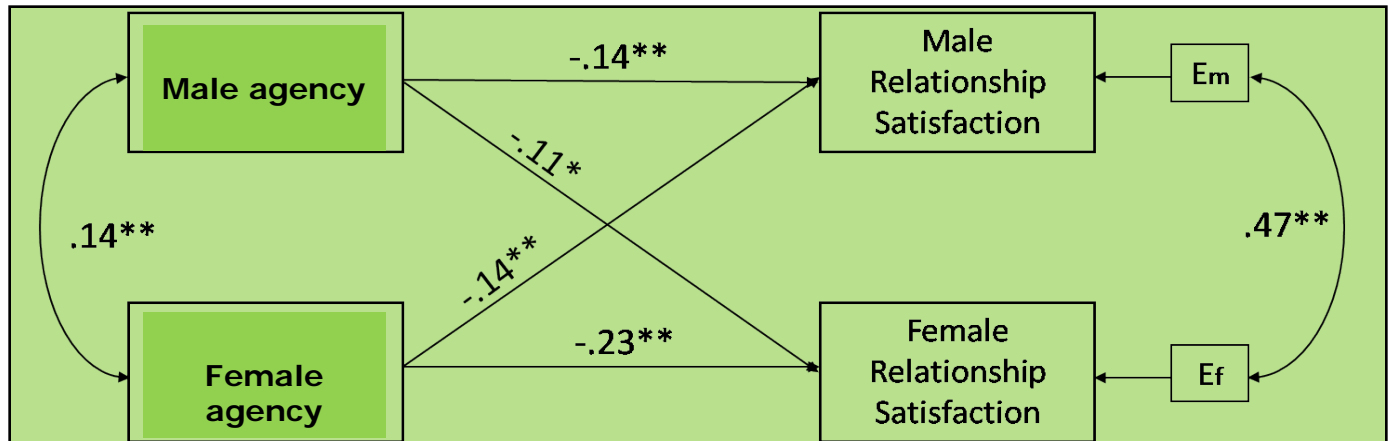
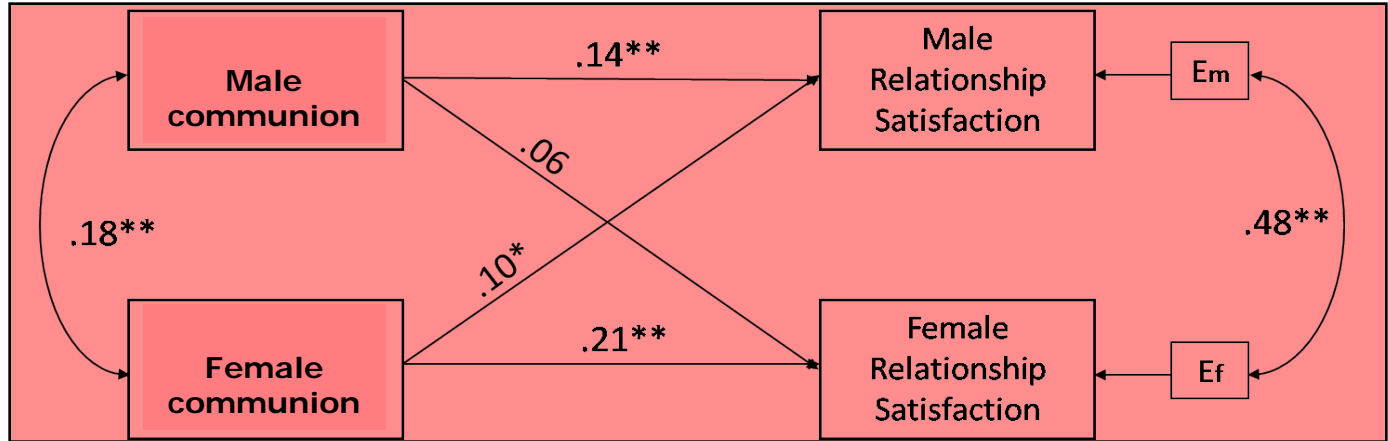
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Personality matters.
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PACT Results

Field Study with 499 Couples in Berlin and Lower Saxony (DFG project awarded to Asendorpf & Neyer)



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Hagemeyer & Neyer (in press). *Psychological Assessment*.



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Adaptive Processes mediate Personality Effects

Assumption:

The negative, cumulative long-term consequences of Neuroticism on Relationship Satisfaction are mediated by biased information processing (Kelley & Conley, 1987).

New Relationship-Specific Approach:

The Relationship-Specific Interpretation Bias (RIB) refers to Personality-congruent information processing (e.g. Anxiety-related cognitive biases).



Illustration: Relationship-Specific Interpretation Bias (*RIB*)

Two parallel tests à 11 relationship scenarios

RIB example:

“Your partner has not told you that s/he loved you for a while. What may be the reason?”

- a) There has not been an occasion lately.**
- b) S/he does not love me anymore or is in doubt.***
- c) We know we love each other without saying it.**

Personality matters.
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- **RIB**
Partner Matching.
Conclusions.

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Abig, Mitte & Neyer (in revision).



Personality matters.
Personality effects.

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- **RIB**

Partner Matching.
Conclusions.

Illustration: **Relationship-Specific Interpretation Bias (*RIB*)**

Ongoing longitudinal study: “My partner, my therapist”

Participants: 239 new couples “in love” (low attrition)

Duration: 1 year, 4 assessments

Hypotheses:

1. RIB changes after engaging in a relationship; though, individual differences remain stable!
2. Over time, RIB mediates the Neuroticism=>Relationship Satisfaction Link.



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Illustration: Relationship-Specific Interpretation Bias (*RIB*)

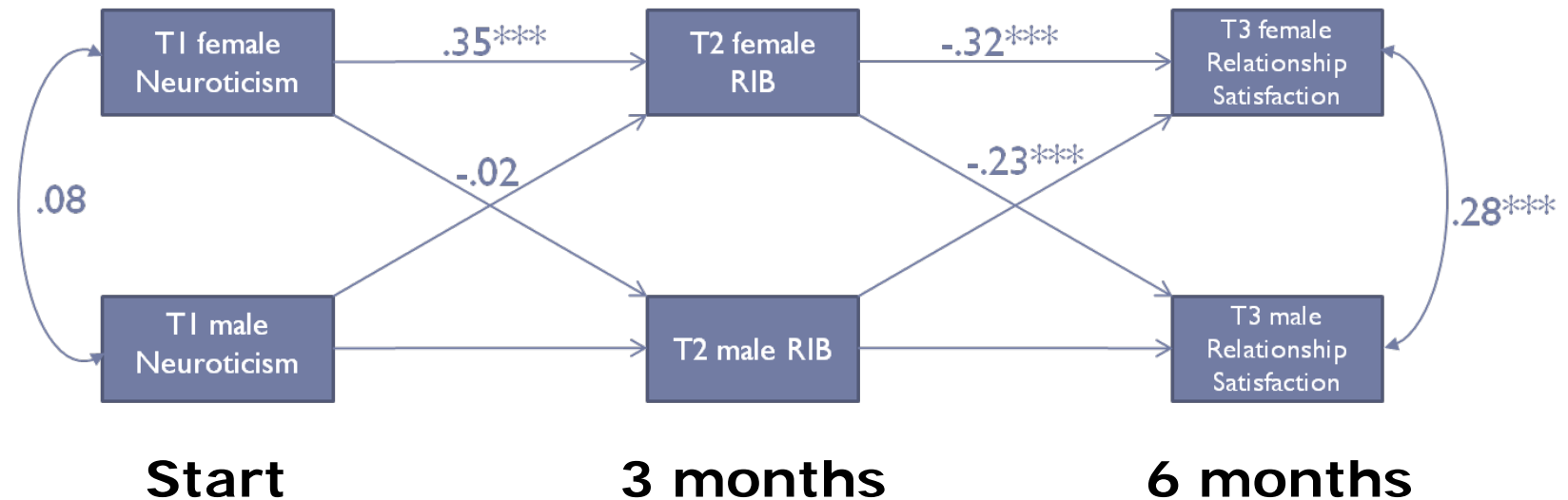
Stability and change over six months (3 assessments)

Scale	Women		Men	
	Rank-order stability	Mean-level Change	Rank-order stability	Mean-level Change
	<i>r</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
Neuroticism	.69**	.06	.73**	.08
RIB	.71**	-.32***	.63***	-.33***
Relationship Satisfaction	.62**	-.22***	.55**	-.34***
Note: 183 couples				

Personality matters.
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Conclusions.

Illustration: Relationship-Specific Interpretation Bias (*RIB*)

Actor-Partner-Mediation Model (APIMeM)



Note: ♀ and ♂ paths set equal, all direct path excluded
Model Fit: $\chi^2(8) = 6.237$, $p = .621$; CMIN = .780; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = .000



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Partner Matching: Assumptions

Personality matters.
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Partner Matching.
Conclusions.

Online Partner Matching is a profitable business.

Agencies offer partner matching based on thorough personality assessment and high success rates.

To date, no empirical data support the efficiency of partner matching.

According to current knowledge, similarity is more important than dissimilarity.

Matching algorithms should be based on profile correlations across various characteristics (attitudes, traits, attachment & interaction styles, attractiveness).

Profile correlations should be controlled for stereotype responding ("normative" personality) and elevation ("level").

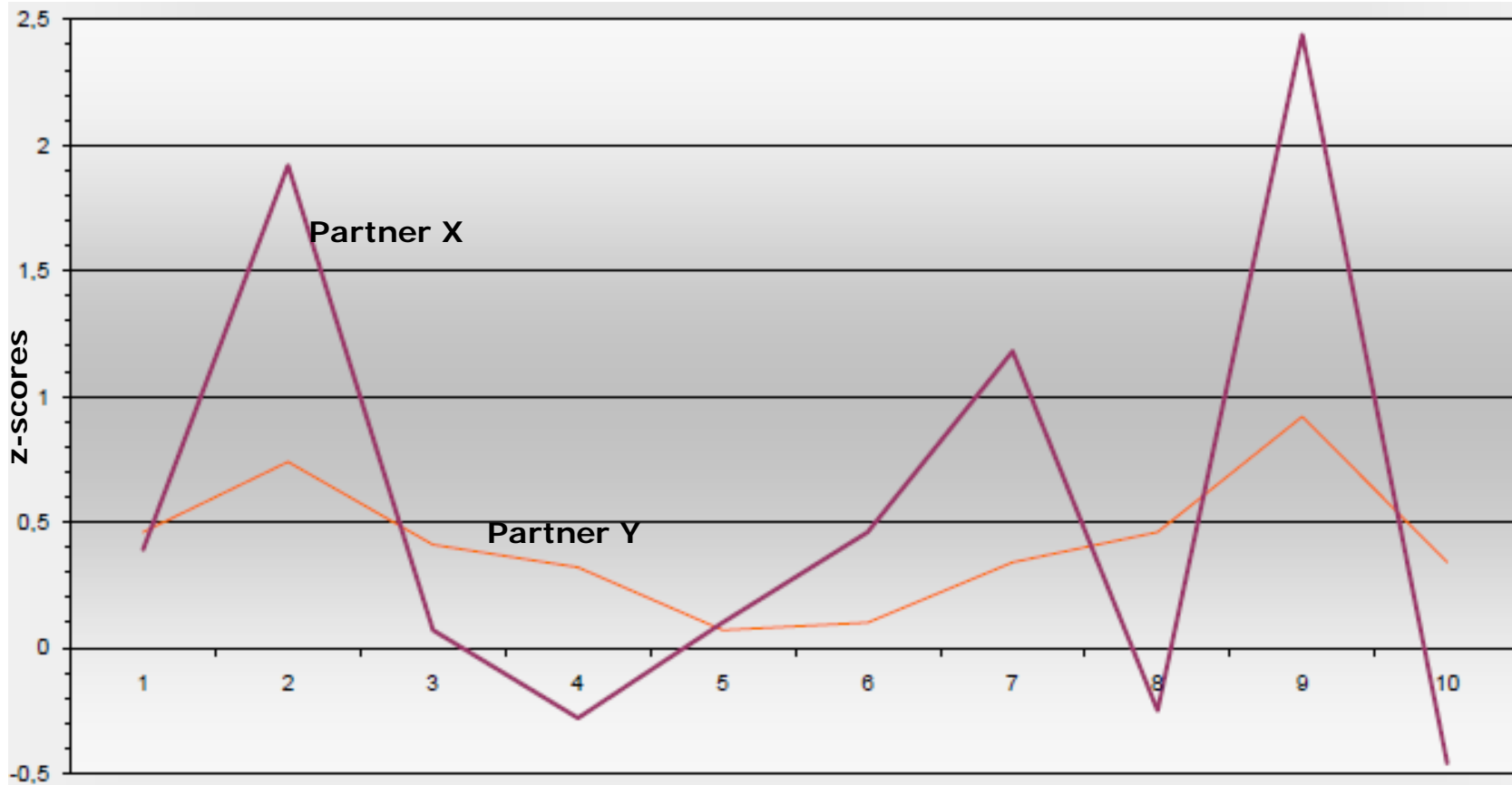


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Conclusions.

Partner Matching: How to be done?

Matching of 2 Personality Profiles (hypothetical)



Dyadic Fit: Pearson Correlation 0.72

Intraclass Correlation 0.34

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Example from Asendorpf & Neyer (in press). *Psychologie der Persönlichkeit* (5th ed.). Berlin: Springer



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Partner Matching: Efficiency and Usefulness?

Personality matters.
Personality effects.

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Partner Matching.
Conclusions.

“Although ... singletons tend to marry persons who are rather similar to themselves, that is, they tend to select mates from among the same roughly 50% of the candidate pool, their specific choices within that pool are no more alike than the choices made by unrelated random pairs.”

Lykken & Tellegen (1993). Is Human Mating Adventitious or the Result of Lawful Choice? A twin study of mate selection. *JPSP*.



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Conclusions

- 1. Personality does matter.**
- 2. Personality effects on Partner Relationships are more likely to emerge than vice verse.**
- 3. Even small effects may have accumulating consequences.**
- 4. Domain-specific traits and the mediating “adaptive” processes should be studied.**
- 5. Non-reactive (implicit) measures can be used in survey research.**
- 6. Partner matching may be useful (within boundaries).**

Thank you for your attention