



Young Couples and Their Families of Origin

*A Social Relations Model Analysis on the
Intergenerational Transmission of Conflict Behavior*



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Topic: Intergenerational transmission of behavior

- 1) Transmission of behavior from one generation to the next?
- 2) Transmission of conflict behavior:
 - (a) verbal aggression
 - (b) withdrawal
 - (c) constructive negotiation*(Kurdek, 1994, 1995; Cramer, 2002; Gottman, 1998)*





Overview

1) Theoretical background:

- current state of research
- processes of transmission:
modeling, role-learning, socialization,
partner-selection
- systemic presumptions:
mutual influences within the family

2) Methods and research design:

- Social-Relation-Models

3) Results:

- mutual influences within the family
- intergenerational transmission of behavior

4) Discussion





Current research on intergenerational transmission

Variety of empirical findings:

- (1) conflict and problem-solving behavior
(Darling et al., 2008; Herzog & Cooney, 2002; Madsen & Collins, 2008; Reese-Weber & Marchand, 2002)
- (2) interaction quality
(Bryant & Conger, 2002; Conger et al., 2000)
- (3) intimacy, individuation/fusion
(Gilliard et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 1991; Lawson & Brossart, 2001)
- (4) violence and aggression
(Kalmuss, 1984; Kwong et al., 2003)
- (5) divorce
(Amato, 1996; Story et al., 2004)



HOW do these effects emerge?



Psychological transmission theories:

- 1) Modeling:
the same-sex parent
as a behavior model
(Bandura, 1973)

The **same sex** according
to the model is
a powerful attribute,
enhancing **identification**
with the model (Bandura)

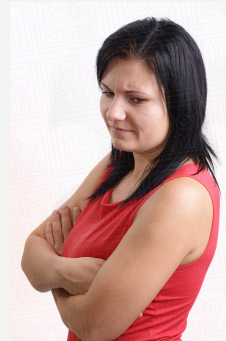




Psychological transmission theories:

- 2) Role-learning:
the opposite-sex parent
as interaction partner
(Brim, 1960, Maccoby, 1959)

The **opposite-sex parent**
may be seen as a significant
interaction partner within the family,
which should play a central role in
shaping behavior towards
opposite-sex interaction partners





Psychological transmission theories:

3) General socialization: stable, personality-related behavior styles

The development of a
relationship personality
(Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002)
through multiple
general socialization processes
should go along with
consistent behavior styles.

The **behavior of sons and daughters**
towards their parents should be reproduced
In the romantic relationship
(e.g. Darling et al., 2008)





Psychological transmission theories:

4) Partner-selection: Correlation between parents' and partner's behavior styles

People tend to **seek partners with behavior styles similar to their parents'**
(Strauss, 1946; VanLear, 1992)

Template Matching
Hypothesis (Geher, 2000) and
Oedipal Imprinting (Little et al. 2003):
Broader impact of the opposite-sex parent



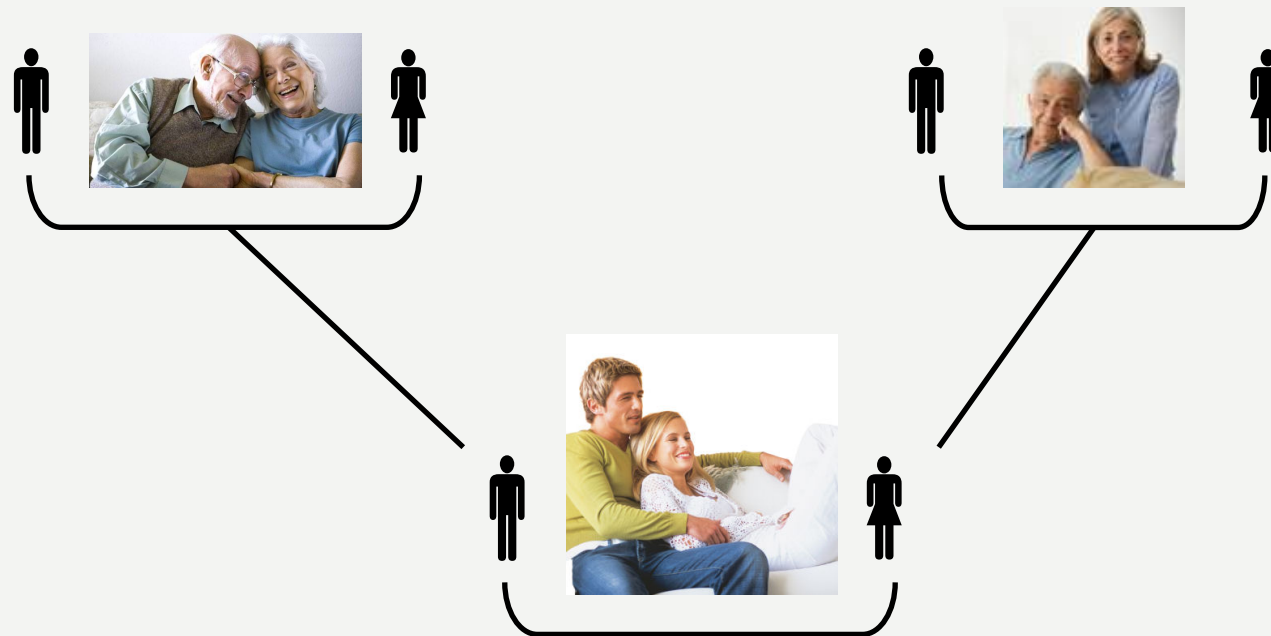
Problems in intergenerational transmission research:

- 1) Almost no gender-sensitive analyses:
Different effects of fathers and mothers on men and women?
- 2) Methodological problems:
 - a) Single-informant studies (subjective measurements?)
 - b) Individual behavior styles between family members are highly interdependent
 - c) Parents' behavior is influenced by their children



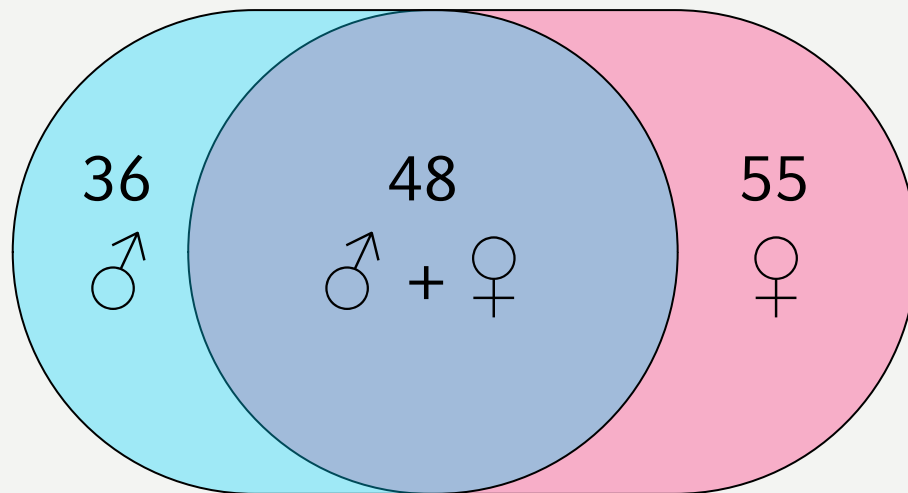
Design

multi-informant and multi-perspective





Sample: 187 entities of analysis (F-M-T-P)



Sets of complete data by all members in family of origin

male target ♂ 84

female target ♀ 103

all target persons 187

Total sample:
652 individuals



Sample characteristics

		<i>Sons</i>	<i>Daughters</i>	<i>Fathers</i>	<i>Mothers</i>
Sample size (N)		84	103	187	187
Age in years (M, SD)		24.6 (5.2)	23.2 (4.7)	55.0 (7.3)	52.6 (6.2)
Residential Status	with parents (%)	45.2	48.5	--	--
	with partner (%)	36.9	37.9	100	
Higher education: A-levels (%)		76.2	87.4	50.8	37.4
Married (%)		10.7	13.6	100	
Duration of relationship in years		3.31 (2.98)	3.38 (3.18)	30.93 (6.41)	



Measurements

Conflict-Resolution-Style (Kurdek, 1994)

- **Constructive problem solving**

(Gottman, 1998: respectful influence)



Negotiating and compromising

- **Verbal aggression**

(Gottman, 1994: criticism, contempt)



Exploding and getting out of control

- **Withdrawing behavior**

(Gottman, 1994; 1999: stonewalling)



Reaching a limit, "shutting down", and refusing to talk any further



Multi-perspective data structure

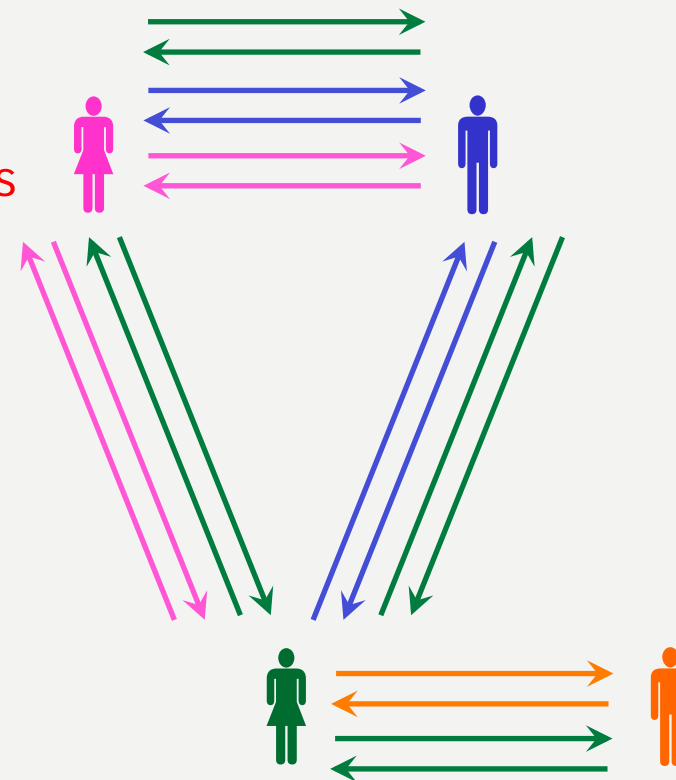
All conflict behavior scales:

Round-Robin data for **self ratings**

Round-Robin data for **ratings of others**

Targets' view on parental behavior

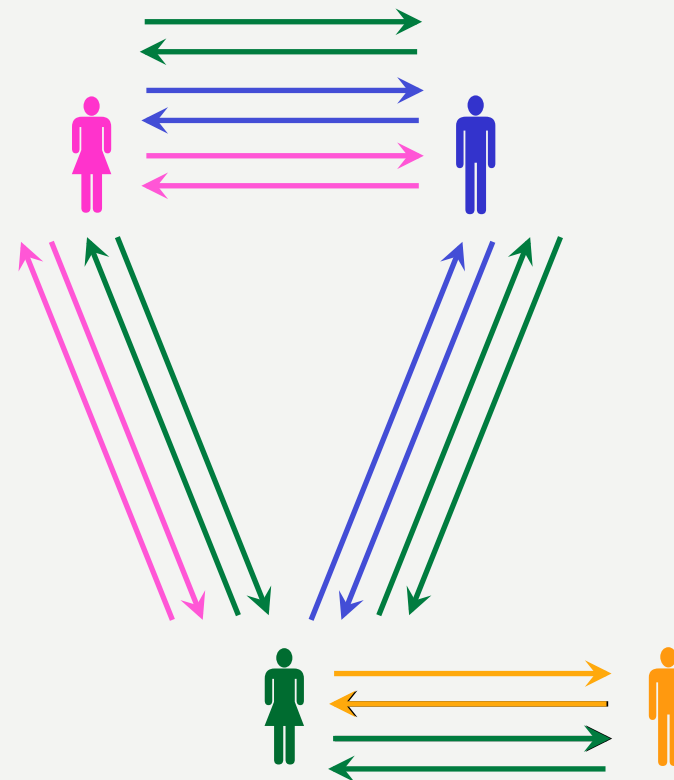
View of self and **view of partner**
within targets' romantic relationship





Possibility of:

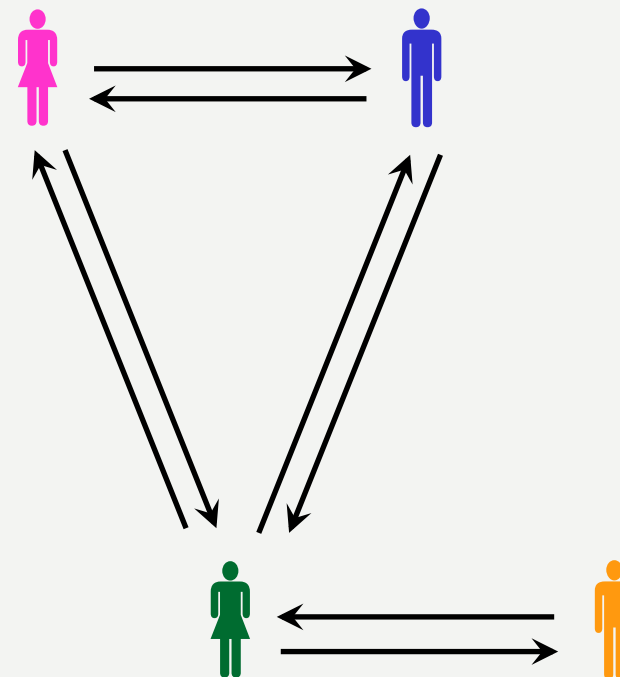
Intersubjective
measurements





Possibility of:

Intersubjective
measurements





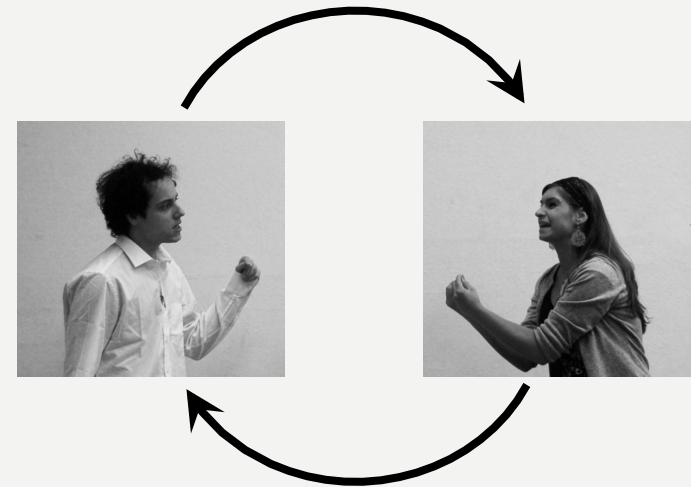
Reliabilities of intersubjective behavior scales

Dyade: Actor → Partner	<i>Constructive Negotiation</i>	<i>Verbal Aggression</i>	<i>Withdrawing Behavior</i>	<i>Global Conflict Style</i>
<i>Intersubjective view</i>				
Father → Mother	.80 (10)	.89 (10)	.85 (10)	.92 (30)
Mother → Father	.77 (10)	.85 (10)	.82 (10)	.90 (30)
Father → Target	.59 (4)	.73 (4)	.61 (4)	.80 (12)
Target → Father	.52 (4)	.64 (4)	.55 (4)	.71 (12)
Mother → Target	.51 (4)	.72 (4)	.57 (4)	.76 (12)
Target → Mother	.63 (4)	.80 (4)	.65 (4)	.82 (12)
Target → Romantic partner	.74 (8)	.88 (8)	.82 (8)	.89 (24)
Romantic partner → Target	.77 (8)	.90 (8)	.81 (8)	.91 (24)



Methodological Challenges: Circularity of behavior

- 1) Interaction partners influence each other (*Gottman, 1998; Kim, Conger et al. 2001*)
- 2) “Pseudounilaterality” within interaction studies (*Duncan et al., 1984*)
- 3) Actor effects vs. interaction partner effects (*Kenny & LaVoie, 1984*)
- 4) Difficulties within studies concerning parent-child-interactions:
Children provoke/initiate behavior in their parents
→ overestimation of parental influence
- 5) Controlling for partner effects is absolutely essential

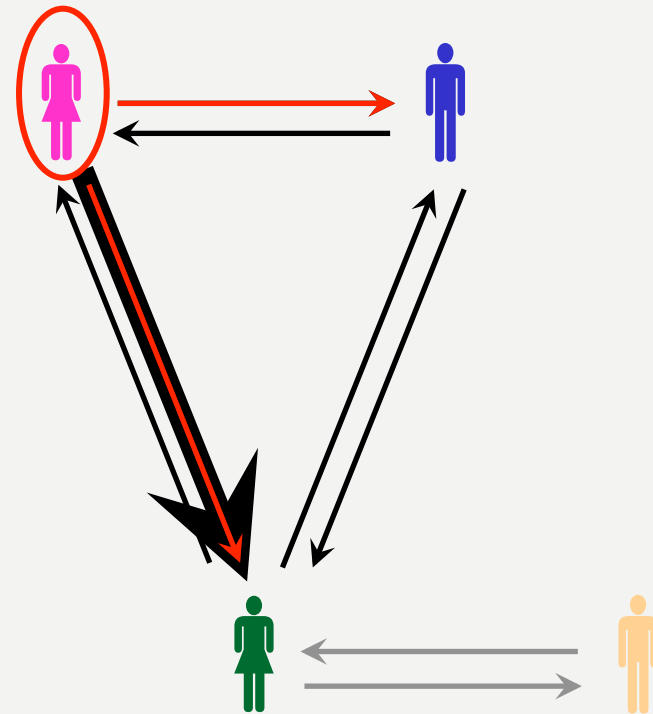




Social Relation Models (SRM):

Estimation of: Actor-Effects & Partner-Effects

According to Kenny & La Voie (1984)
and Kenny et al. (2006):



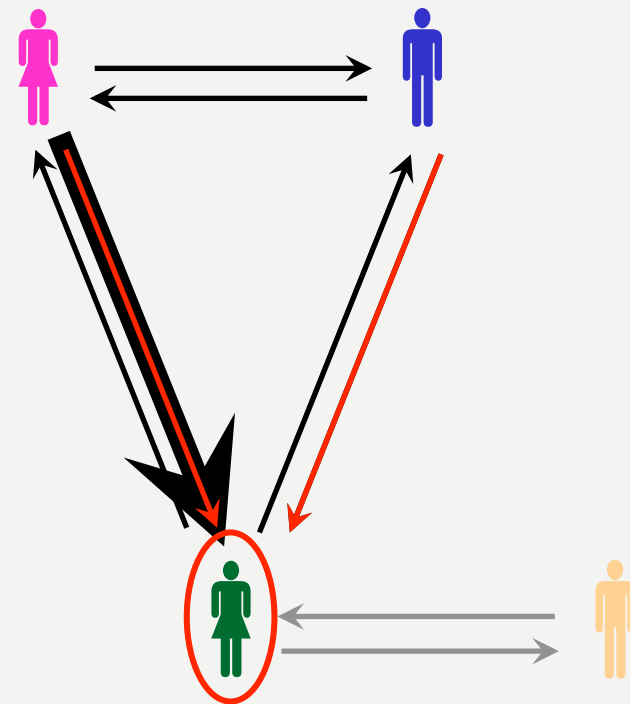
$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Behavior} \\ \hline \text{(intersubject. view)} \\ \hline \end{array} = \text{Actor-Effect} +$$



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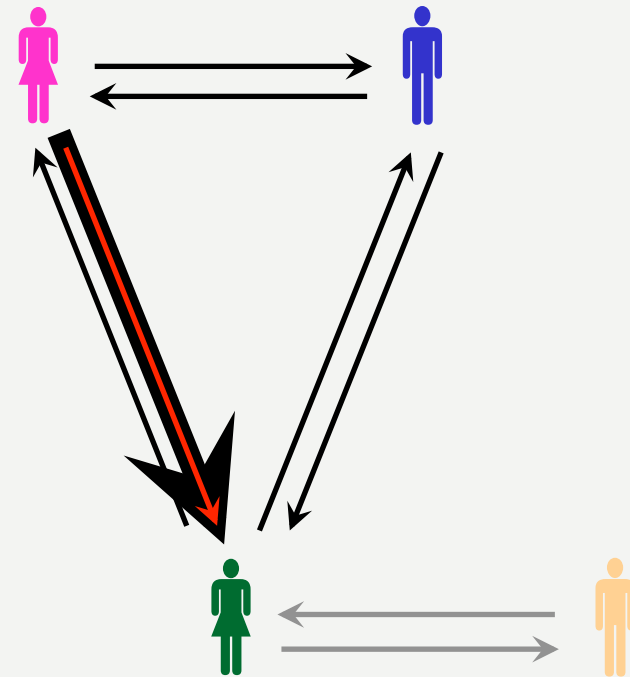
$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Behavior} \\ \hline \text{(intersubject. view)} \\ \hline \end{array} = \text{Actor-Effect} + \text{Partner-Effect} +$$



Social Relation Models (SRM):

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Behavior
(intersubject. view)

=

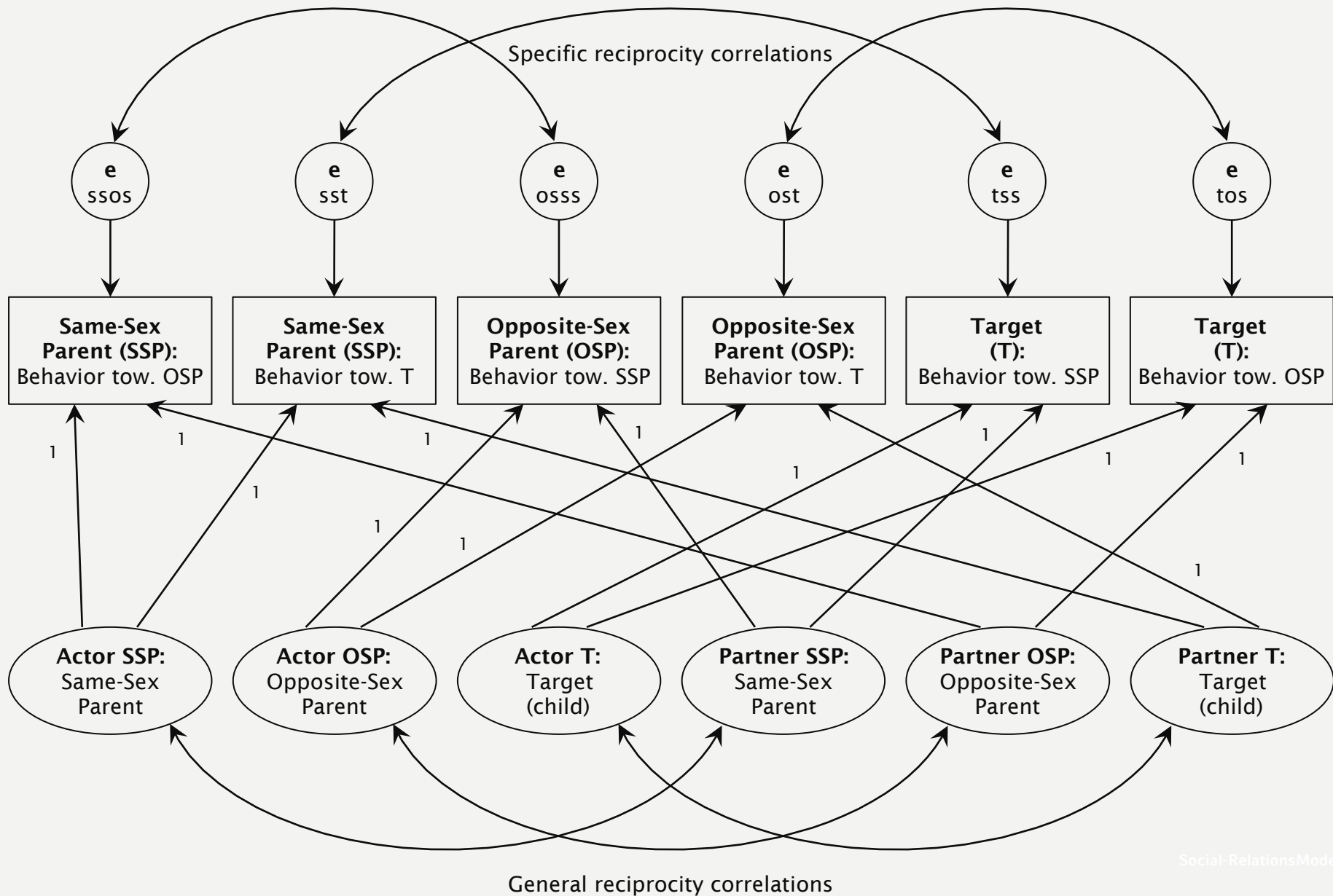
Actor-Effect

+

Partner-Effect

+

Relationship-
Effect + Error

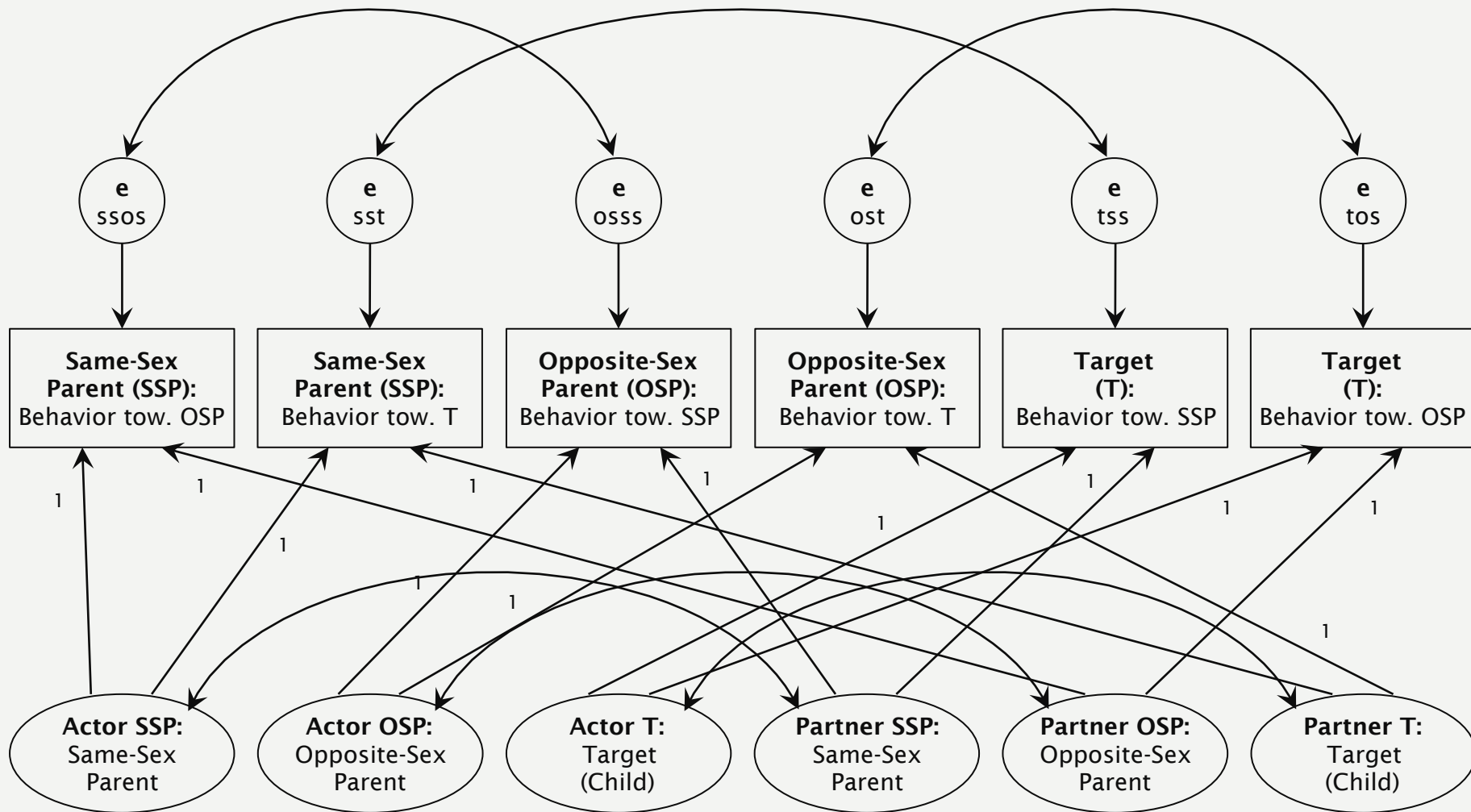




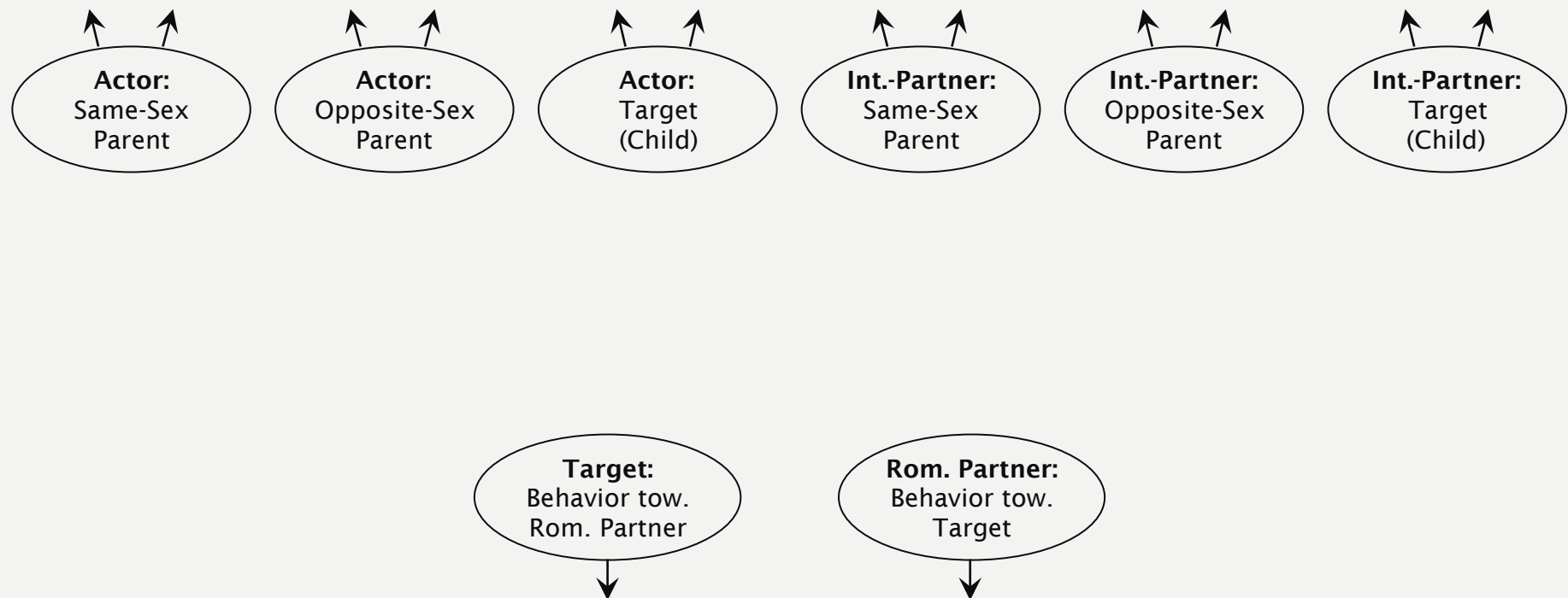
SRM: Average percentage of variance in within-family conflict behaviors explained by actor and partner

	Actor-Effect: % Variance	Partner-Effect: % Variance	Relationship-Eff. incl. Error, % Variance
Constr. Negotiation	57.8* (49.5 – 71.9)	12.7 (2.8 – 26.7)	29.5 (4.1 – 50.3)
Verbal Aggression	57.9* (42.6 – 68.0)	25.4* (14.7 – 48.4)	16.7 (1.0 – 35.6)
Withdrawal	55.4* (44.5 – 67.1)	21.3* (16.0 – 34.9)	23.3 (13.0 – 34.0)
Global Conflict Style	59.7* (45.5 – 73.1)	22.4* (16.1 – 38.0)	17.9 (0.0 – 36.3)

- **Constructive Negotiation** is primarily a characteristic trait of the **acting person**
 ⇨ **Responsibility for one's own positive forms of behavior**
 (responsibility **only** of the acting person)
- **Aggression and Withdrawal** are significantly provoked by the **interaction partner**
 ⇨ **Co-responsibility for negative forms of behavior**
 (for one's own **and** the partner's forms of beh.)



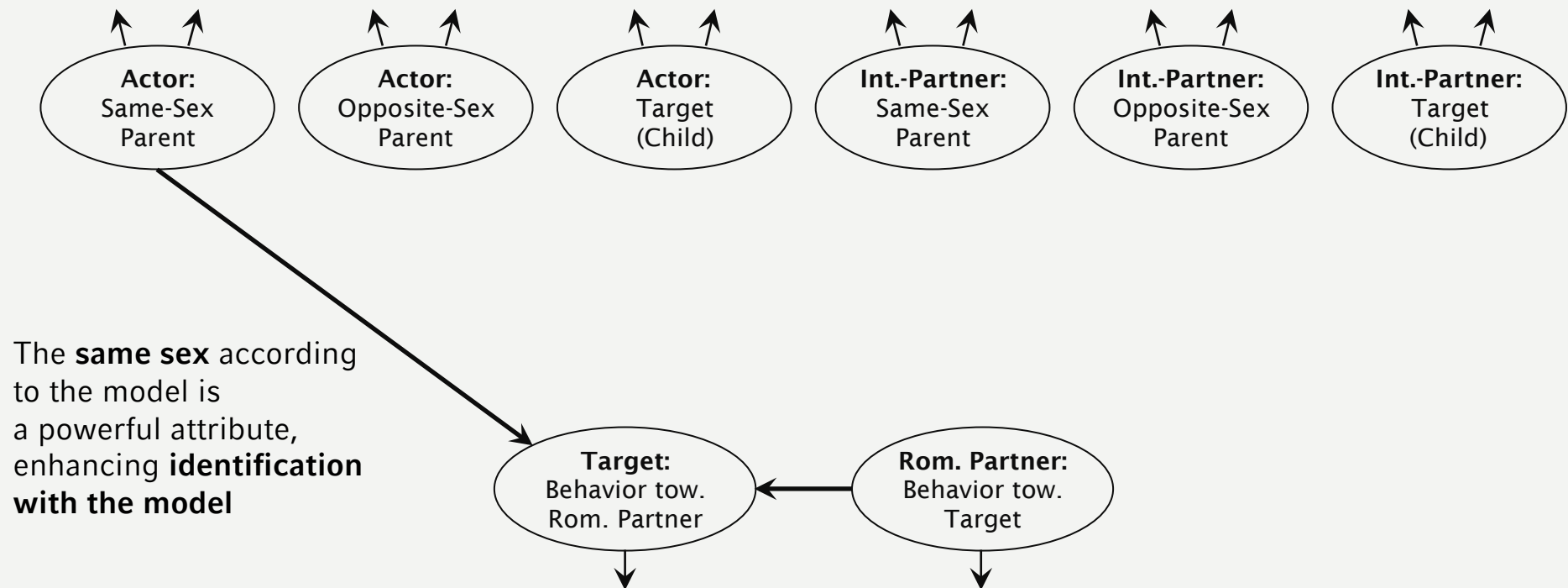
Social-RelationsModel



Social-RelationsModell

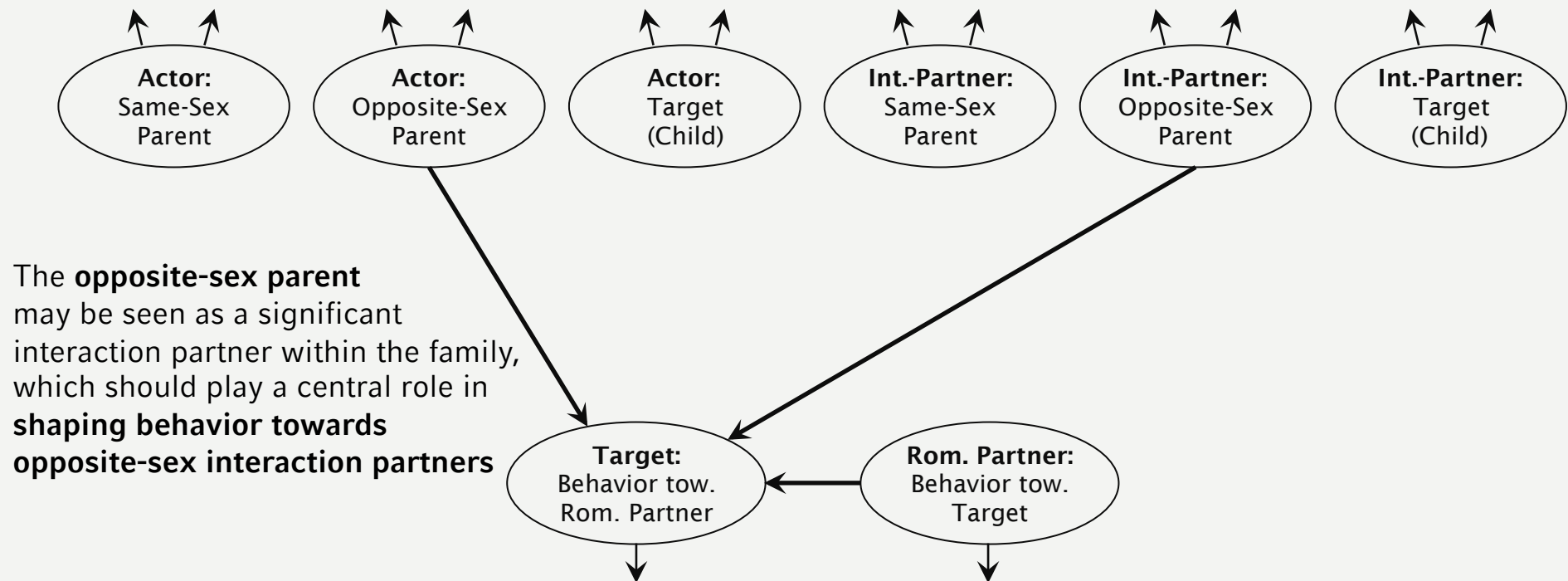


Hypothesis I: Social Learning and Modeling *(Bandura, 1976)*



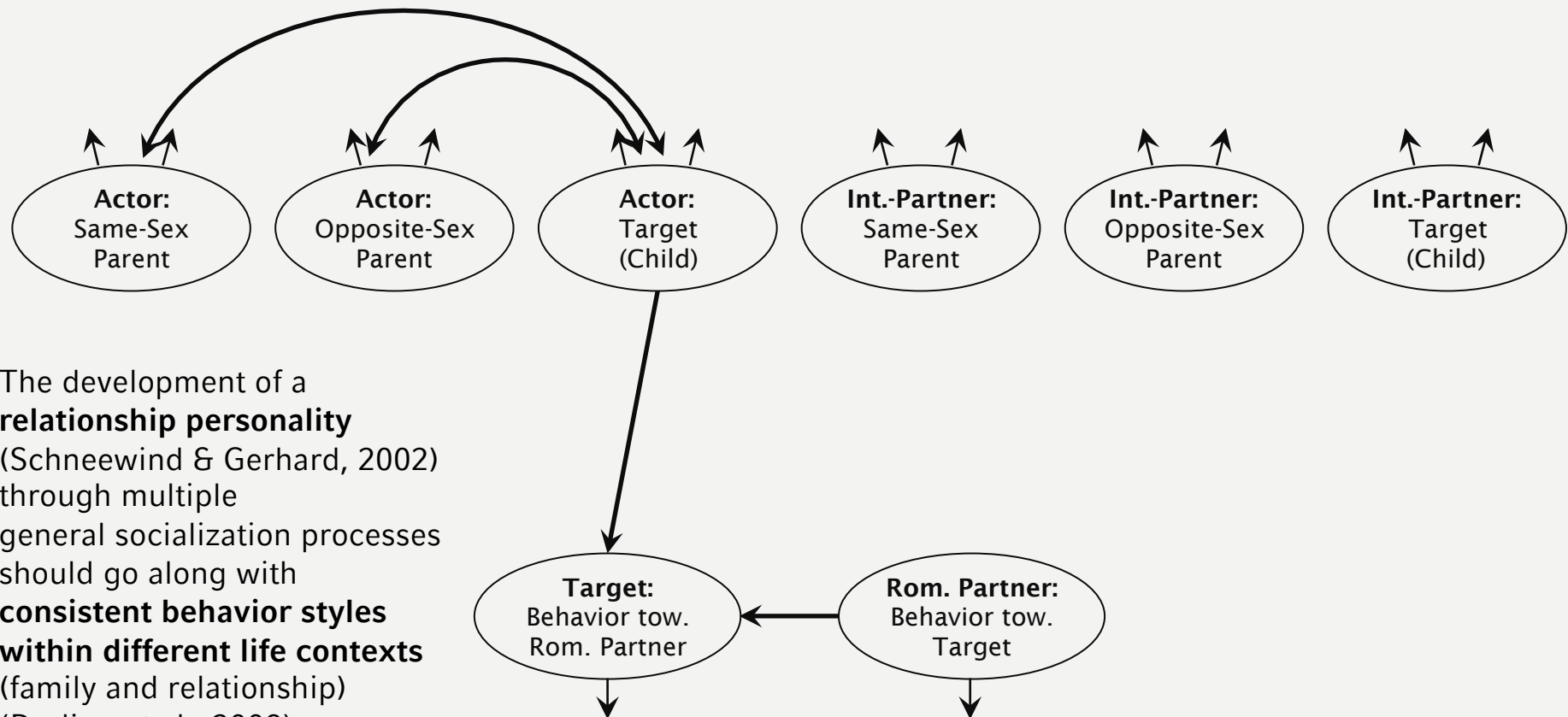


Hypothesis II: Role Learning *(Brim, 1960, Connell, 1979; Maccoby, 1959)*



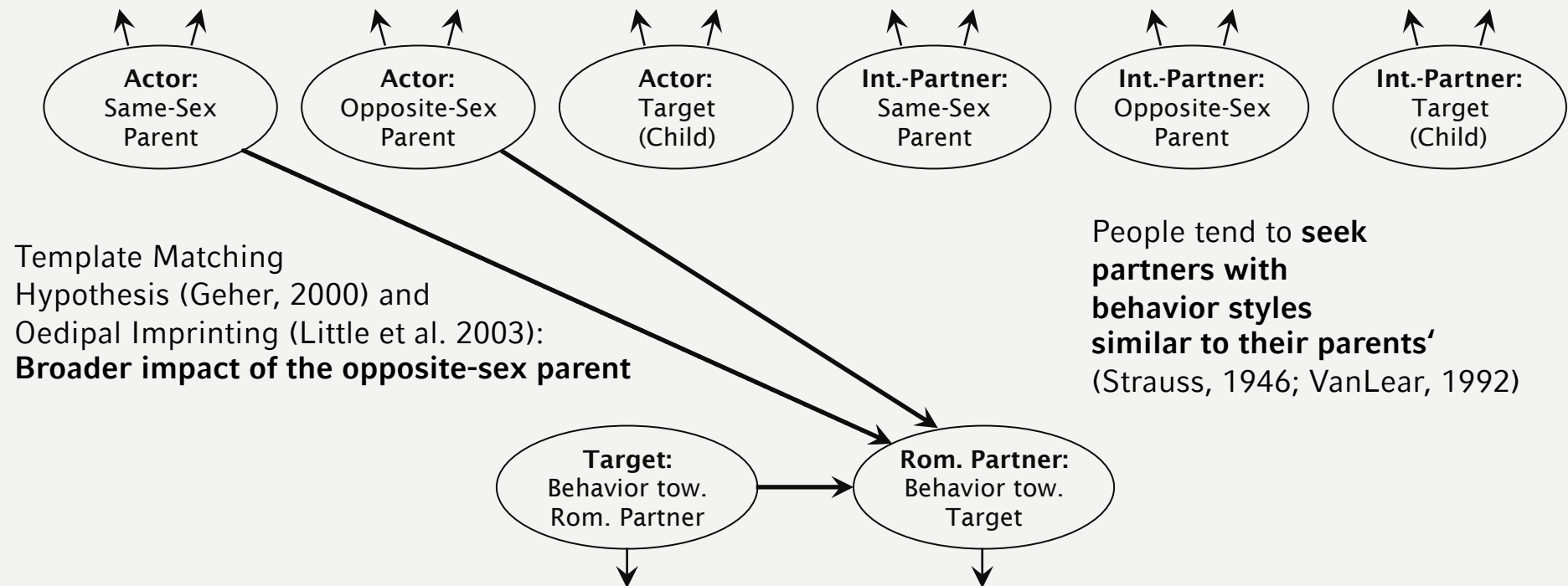


Hypothesis III: General Socialization



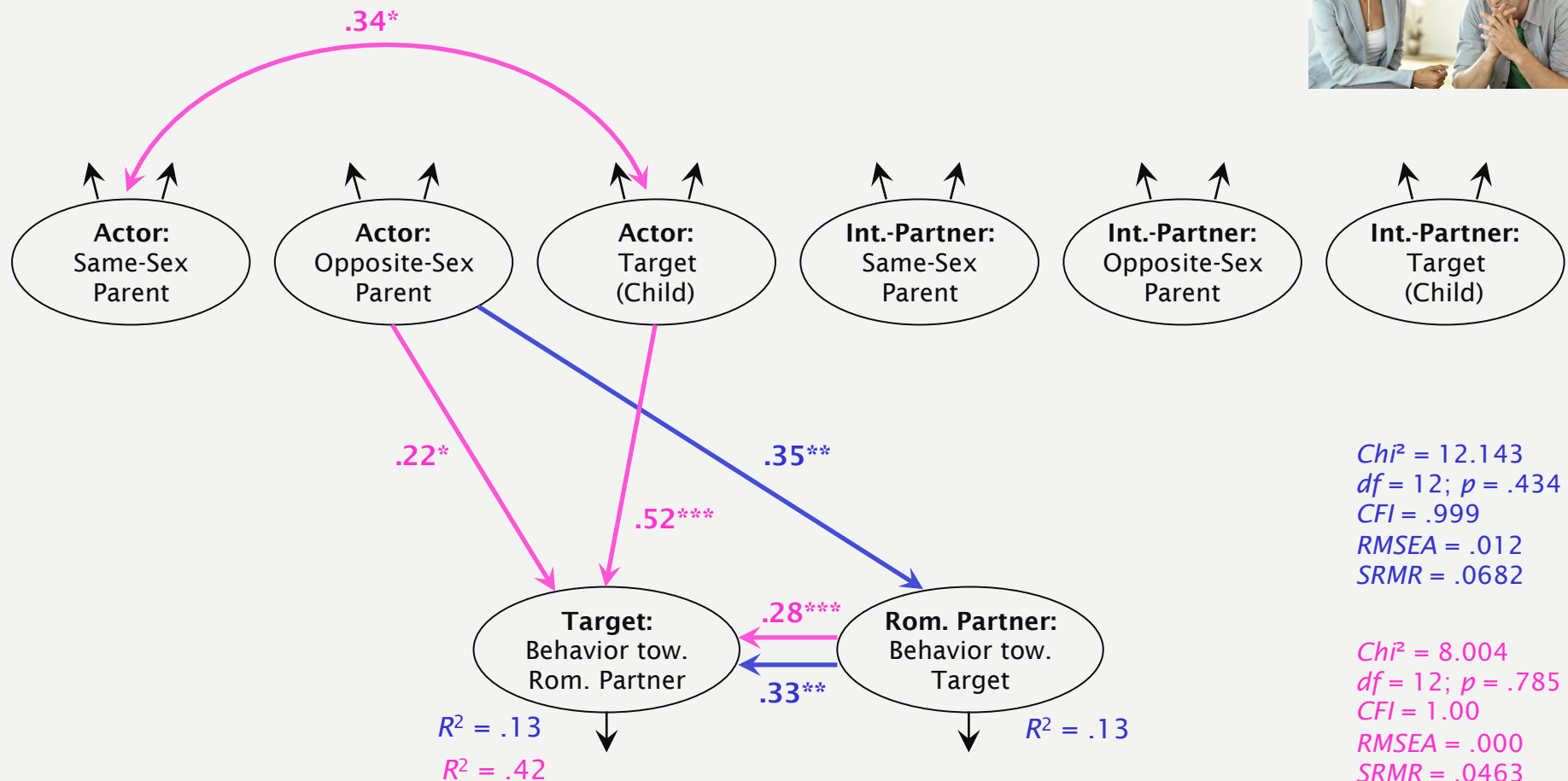


Hypothesis IV: Partner Selection



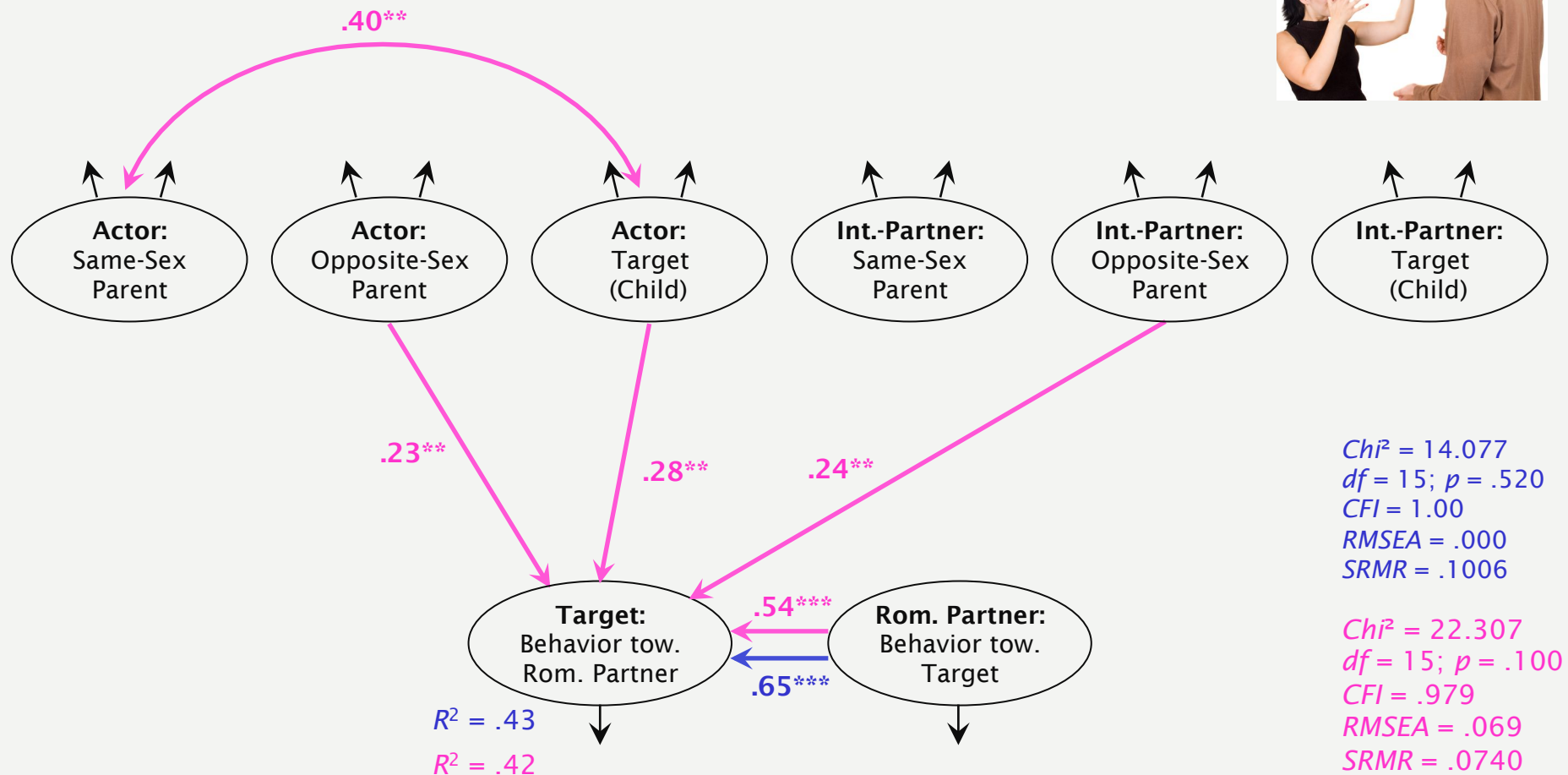


Transmission of Constructive Negotiation



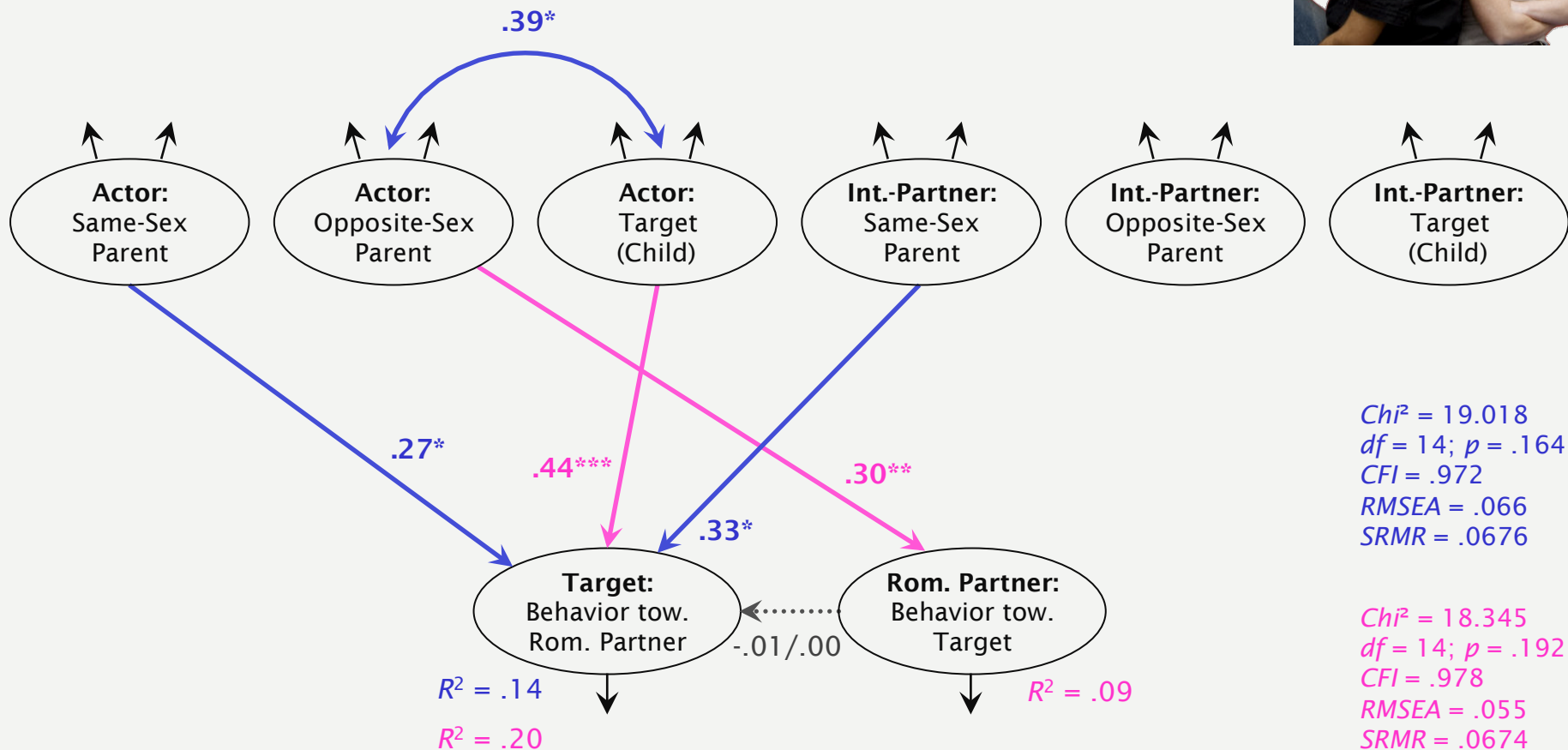


Transmission of Verbal Aggression



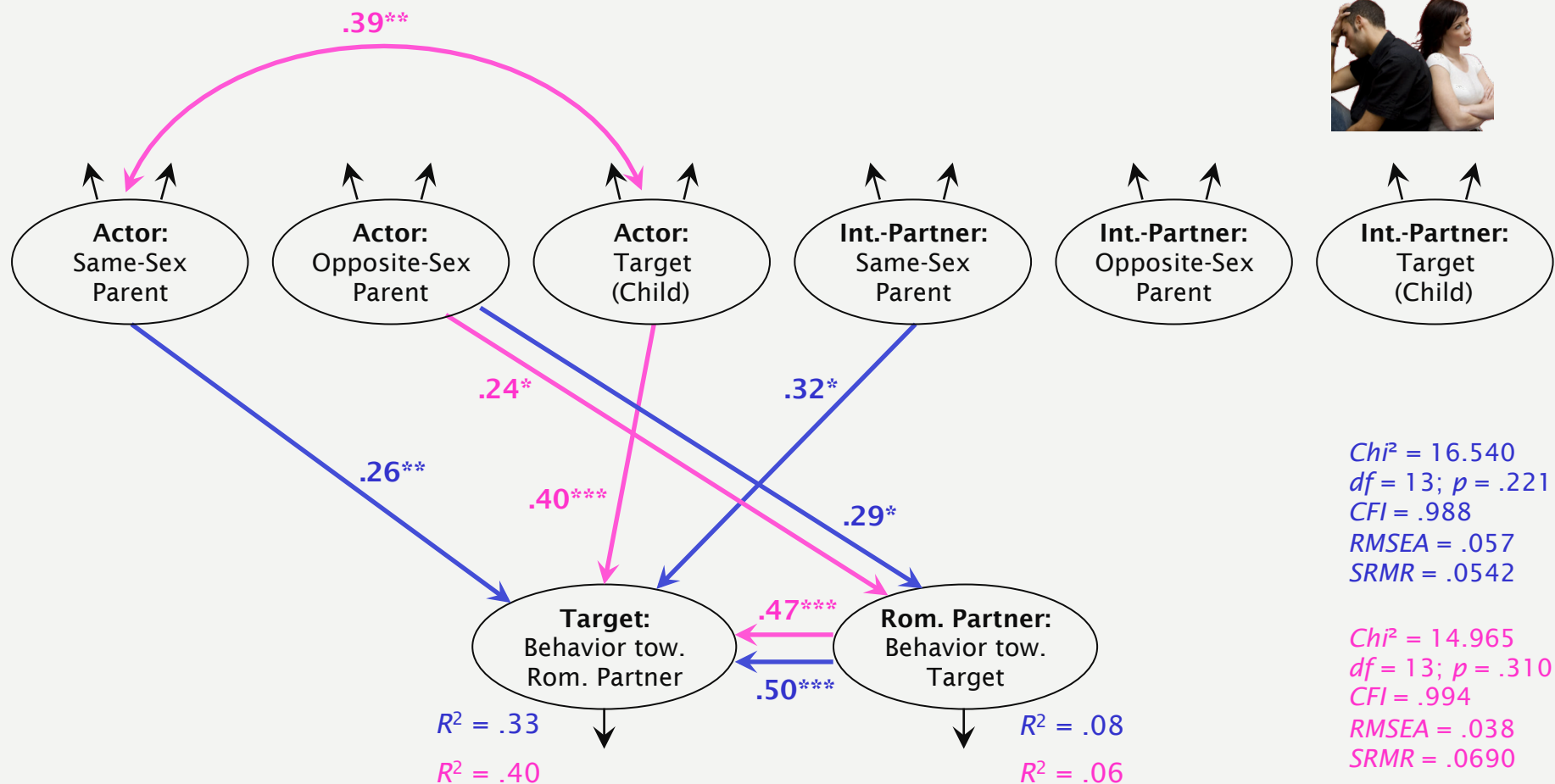


Transmission of Withdrawal





Transmission of Global Conflict Style





Discussion: Learning Processes and Socialization

Sons:

- **Modeling** through *Father* (Withdrawal, Conflict Style)

Daughters:

- **Role Learning** in interaction with *Father* (Constr. Negotiation, Aggression)
- **General Socialization** through *Mother* (Constr. Negotiation, Aggression, Conflict Style)
- **Continuity in behavior styles** (all variables)

Mothers: Broad impact on **personality-related stable behavior styles** and on **behavior styles within the family**

Fathers: Direct, specific impact on the **behavior styles within the romantic relationship**



Discussion: Partner selection

- **Importance of the opposite-sex parent:**
Template matching hypothesis (*Daly & Wilson, 1990; Geher, 2000*)

Discussion: Practical implications

Nature of positive and negative behaviors (actor & partner effects):

- Negative behavior styles are largely provoked by the interaction partner, not so positive behavior styles (see Arranz-Becker, 2011)
- **Positive behaviors** (actor effects only): **individual training** essential
- **Negative behaviors** (sign. partner effects): **couple counselling** indicated (interpunctuation, reciprocity, co-responsibility)

Intergenerational transmission of behavior styles:

- The **family of origin** has broad impact on specific behavior styles
- But: Large part of variance is explained by **partner's behavior**



Limitations:

- **Cross-sectional data:** no causality
- **Limitations of the sample** (nuclear families, high satisfaction)
- **Moderation of age?** (*Walper et al., 2008*)
- **Influence of peer relationships?**
- **Cognitive transmission processes?** (forgiveness, attributions)
(*Segrin & Taylor, 2006*)

Conclusion:

Research of intergenerational transmission effects:

- should be based on **specific behavior styles**
- should control for **interaction-partner effects**



Thank you for your attention!