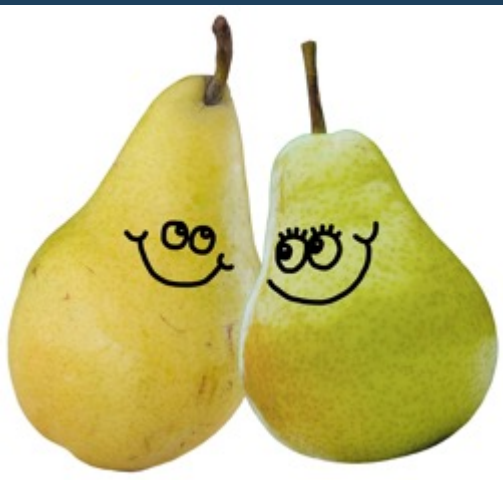




Welcome to...

Psychology of Close Relationships!



January 23, 2024



Greetings and Best Wishes From Your Teaching Team!

We're delighted to be here with you for this super cool topic!

- Alison Hui, Psy.D
- Holly Parker, Ph.D.



Okay, Let's Talk About a Little Class Business!

Course Overview

- Romantic relationships and friendships
- Scientific literature will be the foundation of our learning, but popular press and other forms of media will be introduced too.

Course Goals

- Take a comprehensive tour of the research in relationship psychology, its underlying theories, and any special considerations inherent in conducting this kind of research.
- Learn how to effectively apply the knowledge acquired in this course.
- Have fun and enjoy the learning process!

Respect for Diversity

- The diversity that each of you brings to this class is a resource, a strength, and a great benefit, and it is immensely important to us that you all feel welcome and well-served in this course.
- Our goal is to cultivate a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities and the intersection between them (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion, ability).

Respect for Diversity

To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Harvard records, please let us know.
- If something was said in class (by anyone, including me or your teaching fellow) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me and/or your teaching fellow about it.

Respect for Diversity

- Emotional safety is essential for a sense of belonging, for learning, and for taking healthy risks—let's work together to cultivate it.

I'm going to work from an assumption that any comments you make are well-intended.

In the interest of all students, if I believe that a comment may have an unintended negative impact on other members of the class, I will endeavor to respectfully interject and move the discussion in a direction that I hope will feel more helpful.

Over the course of this class, you'll likely find that you agree with some of the ideas expressed in class and disagree with others, and it's perfectly healthy to engage in thoughtful agreement and disagreement.

In all interactions, please communicate your views and reactions in a respectful manner and please do your best to be mindful of the impact a comment may have on your fellow classmates.

Respect for Diversity

- We encourage and appreciate your suggestions. Please let us know about ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. Thank you very much!

Academic Accommodations

- The quality of your learning experience at Harvard Extension School means a great deal to me. If you need academic adjustments or accommodations, please don't hesitate to seek them out. The Accessibility Services Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students.
- If you need academic adjustments or accommodations, please contact the Accessibility Services Office:
Phone: (617) 998-9640
E-mail: accessibility@extension.harvard.edu
- Website for the Accessibility Services Office:
<https://extension.harvard.edu/for-students/support-and-services/accessibility-services/>

Course Policies

- Watch or attend each online class and participate in section through weekly discussion board posts.
- Care for yourself

Illness and various life events certainly happen. If you are ill or an emergency arises, the teaching team and I value self-care and we want to support you.

If you become ill or if you have a personal or family emergency, please note that you may miss two weeks of section posts without needing to make up those posts, unless you were the discussion leader for that week. Please let me and/or your teaching fellow know in advance (whenever advance notice is possible) that you will not be able to participate in section posts during the week.

Course Policies

- Read the assigned articles each week.
- Complete each assignment and turn it in on time.

Please post your written assignment on the course website by the due date. Written assignment grades will be reduced by 10% for each day late.

Please also note that assignments will not be accepted more than five days late, unless an extension was granted.

Course Policies

- Extensions will not be permitted except in extenuating circumstances such as illness, the loss of a loved one, or personal emergencies, and they must be requested in advance, except, of course, in the case of an unforeseen personal emergency that would literally make an advance request impossible.
- Please note that stressful circumstances such as a busy schedule or multiple other assignments, although certainly challenging and unpleasant, do not count as extenuating circumstances for an extension.
- If you're unsure whether your situation falls under the kinds of extenuating circumstances described here, please don't hesitate to reach out and ask. We welcome anytime you decide to reach out.

Course Policies

- A note about assignments due near the end of the term:

Because everyone's final grades need to be calculated and officially posted at the end of the term, there is an exception to the 10% per day/five-day lateness policy.

For work due near the end of the term, if you receive an extension or if you turn it in late without an extension, please be aware that your teaching fellow must receive this work by 11:59pm by May 10, otherwise they will not be able to grade it and you will not receive credit for it.

We really want to give you credit for your hard work and we know you'd prefer this too! Thankfully, we can all work together to make this happen, so if you have an extension or if you turn in an assignment late, please remember to turn it in by this final, firm deadline of May 10. Thank you!

Course Policies

- Assignments must be posted in a readable format.
- Please remember that you are responsible for turning in the correct draft of your assignment. If you turn in the wrong draft, in fairness to the rest of the class, you will not have an opportunity to submit a new one after the deadline. So please double-check your file so you can submit the correct document and prevent that situation from happening.

Course Policies

- Plagiarism: It's a very bad idea, but I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that. Please distinguish your own ideas from those of others, and when in doubt, cite. 😊
- Collaboration—an excellent idea! By all means, please feel free to discuss the material together, consult with each other on paper topics, and share sources. Just be sure that any written work you submit is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic.

Course Policies

- If you would like to learn more about how to properly cite sources or write assignments, or to learn more about Harvard Extension School's policy on academic integrity, you can refer to the following links:

Harvard Extension School policies: www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-conduct/academic-integrity

Harvard Extension School Tips to Avoid Plagiarism: <https://extension.harvard.edu/for-students/support-and-services/using-sources-effectively-and-responsibly/>

Harvard Extension School's Writing Center:
<http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/writing-center>

Course Policies

- Please note the following on publishing or distributing course materials:

Students may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor.

Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: Lecture notes, lecture slides, video, or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students' work, and answer keys.

Students who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw from the Summer School.

Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.

Course Policies

- Food:

I just refuse to stand between anyone and their food. You are warmly welcome to enjoy food during any live class meetings. 😊

- Syllabi and class communication:

Please read the course and the section syllabi very carefully. They're two different documents and they contain valuable information.

Please be sure to read course announcements and class emails.

Course Hopes

- Ask questions:

There is NEVER such thing as a stupid question! Teaching is my passion, and when you ask questions, you give me a rich opportunity to do what I love.

- Participate:

It's very important to me that your time in this class feels rewarding, enriching, and enjoyable. A large part of that is your level of engagement with the class and your fellow students.

My hope is that you will all feel part of a class community and get to know each other better, and Alison and me the chance to know you and hear your thoughts too! 😊

Course Hopes

- Don't go it alone—ask for help

Asking for help isn't always easy. In fact, sometimes it can be really hard to do, and it might seem preferable to push off asking or not ask at all. However, no one should have to deal with challenges on their own, and it's healthy to ask for help.

We want you to know that we understand this, and we really want to support you. So, we'd like to kindly encourage you to see if you can push your comfort zone and ask us for help when you need it.

For example, let us know if you don't understand a concept, if you're struggling to meet a deadline, or if life circumstances are interfering with your ability to engage in the class. We'll do our very best to help you, to work with you, and to guide you to additional resources if needed.

Course Hopes

- Remember that we are available to meet with you.

We will both hold student hours by appointment, and Alison may offer set scheduled times. It's deeply important to us to be here for you, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Course Logistics

- Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/133213>
- About email: Your questions matter, and I will make every effort to respond to any email within 48 hours during the workweek.

Course Requirements: Writing Assignments

- If you are an undergraduate student, you will have three writing assignments due over the course of the semester. If you are a graduate student, you will have four writing assignments due.
- In all writing assignments, you will want to engage in a critical analysis, drawing from scientific research and theoretical concepts to support your claims. You will also want to consider counterarguments to your argument whenever relevant.
- The first writing assignment will not be graded to remove any pressure you may be feeling, and to enhance your learning experience and ability to explore in your writing. Please note that you will still need to turn in a full paper in APA format with references.

Course Requirements: Writing Assignments

Undergraduate Students

- Three writing assignments (70% of your grade)
- Paper due dates:
 - Paper 1: February 20 (10% for turning in a full paper; no grade for writing itself)
 - Paper 2: March 26 (30%: Rewrite of paper 1)
 - Paper 3: May 7 (30%: New paper topic)
- Please note that all papers must be turned in by 11:59pm (EST) on the due date.

Course Requirements: Writing Assignments

Graduate Students

- Four writing assignments (70% of your grade)
- Paper due dates:
 - Paper 1: February 20(10% for turning in a full paper; no grade for writing itself)
 - Paper 2: March 26(20%: Rewrite of Paper 1)
 - Paper 3: April 16 (20%: New Paper Topic for Paper 3)
 - Paper 4: May 7 (20%: Rewrite of Paper 3)
- Please note that all papers must be turned in by 11:59pm (EST) on the due date.

Course Requirements

- These assignments are intended to help you grow in your ability to:

Freely explore and develop your ideas in the psychology of close relationships

Test your ideas against the scientific literature

Summarize others' arguments and theories

Support or counter a position using research findings

Incorporate relevant theories and concepts

Grow in your writing

Paper Prompts

You may choose from among the options below for your short paper topic. For these options, please use APA style throughout your paper. Paper length: 3-5 pages

- *Option A (A Friend Indeed):* Arguably, friendships play a crucial role in life for many people. Please reflect on a friend of yours and describe that individual and your friendship. What makes this person someone you consider a friend? Why is this individual special to you? How has this friendship impacted you? Please integrate relevant readings in the literature and topics raised in class discussion to support your description of the development of your friendship and the factors that support your friendship.

Paper Prompts

- *Option B (Relationship Researcher: Short Research Proposal):* Choose one or more of the articles from the reading list or from the broader literature on close relationships and use it to generate a research proposal. Identify a question left open by the article's results and propose a study to examine it. Specify your research question, hypothesis, proposed method (including participants, procedure, and measures), and expected results. Conclude your proposal with what contribution your study will make to the field.

Paper Prompts

- *Option C (Relationships in Pop Culture: Music, Movies, Plays, TV, Books, Short Stories, and Social Media):* We can learn a great deal about cultural expectations and beliefs about relationships from the ways in which they are portrayed in entertainment mediums such as music and film. Please analyze a song, film, play, TV show, book, short story, or social media post with an emphasis on the message being conveyed about relationships. Questions to consider include: What beliefs and expectations are being transmitted? Do expectations differ for different groups of people, or do they apply toward everyone? Does the message indicate what will happen if these expectations are not met? Who is the target audience of the message? Support your analyses with concepts drawn from readings and class discussion.

Paper Prompts

- *Option D (Couple Therapist)*: Imagine that you are a couple therapist and you are meeting with a couple for the first time. After they give you informed consent to treat them, they describe what brought them into therapy. You will have the perspective of each member of the couple to consider. You'll find the information you need on this couple on the course site under "*Assignment Related Documents*" in the "*Files*" section). Based on what each person told you, consider the following: (1) What is the primary problem bringing this couple into therapy? (2) What factors may be exacerbating the problem? (3) Are there any features of the relationship that are strengths? (4) What would be your recommendations for this couple? Be sure to reference concepts and/or findings from the readings and class discussion.

Paper Prompts

- *Option E (Literature Review)*: Conduct a concise literature review on an area within the larger domain of the psychology of close relationships. For example, you may ask a question and use the literature to determine the answer or compare two theoretical positions and decide which one has greater empirical support.
- *Option F (Self-Help Book Review)*: Critique a self-help book on close relationships (it can involve romantic relationships or friendships). I will provide you with examples, but you are also free to choose your own. Please speak with me for final approval if you choose your own.

Paper Prompts

- Option G (*Op-Ed Article*): Write an op-ed article on relationship success. You may apply it to friendships or romantic relationships. Please be clear about your intended audience and the focus of your article. In other words, is there a particular aspect of relationship success, such as communication, that is the focus of your article, or are you writing a more general piece? Although you will want to match your writing style to your intended audience, remember to reference the literature in your article.

Course Requirements

- Communication on Writing Goals (15%):

This writing intensive course will give you an exciting opportunity to develop and improve your skills as a writer. Toward this end, one of the course requirements is to reflect on your writing goals.

You'll do this twice, first by sharing these goals in writing with your teaching fellow at the start of the semester, and again by writing about your progress toward these goals toward the end of the semester and submitting them to your teaching fellow.

Course Requirements

- Participation in Discussion Boards (15%):

In discussion section, you will be assigned to two roles during the term: Discussion leader and discussion participant.

You will be assigned to be a discussion leader at the beginning of the semester. As a discussion leader, you will manage a discussion thread in which you will respond twice during the week.

During the weeks when you are not assigned to be a leader, you will be required to post twice as a discussion participant, either in response to the discussion leader or to another member or your section.

And if the discussion leaders don't post by the designated post day of the week, you will be free to comment as you choose on the week's readings.

Course Materials

- All course readings are available on the course website or through electronic download through the HOLLIS system.

Okay, now let's have some fun!





If you really care about relationships, you're not alone...





























**If you think that the human race
values relationships, you're
absolutely right...**

And if you think that the high value placed on relationships translates into plenty of media exposure and high profits, you're right again.

Consider the hopes, beliefs, and anxieties about relationships in these promotional pieces...

Online dating industry expanded at 3.5% a year since 2008, right through the recession.

It's a \$2.2 billion dollar industry, and it's expected to grow by \$100 million each year through 2019.

As of 2015, Match.com helped create 517,000 relationships, 92,000 marriages, and 1 million babies.

In 2014 alone, Viagra brought in sales of almost \$1.7 billion.

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2015/04/06/online-datings-age-wars-inside-tinder-and-eharmonys-fight-for-our-love-lives/>)

<http://theweek.com/articles/450841/how-online-dating-became-2-billion-industry>

<http://www.datingsitesreviews.com/staticpages/index.php?page=Match-com-Statistics-Facts-History#ref-ODS-Match-2015-7>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/pfizer-allergan-deal-lyrica-prevnar-viagra-enbrel-makers-ten-most-profitable-drugs-a6745321.html>



Viagra, Pfizer



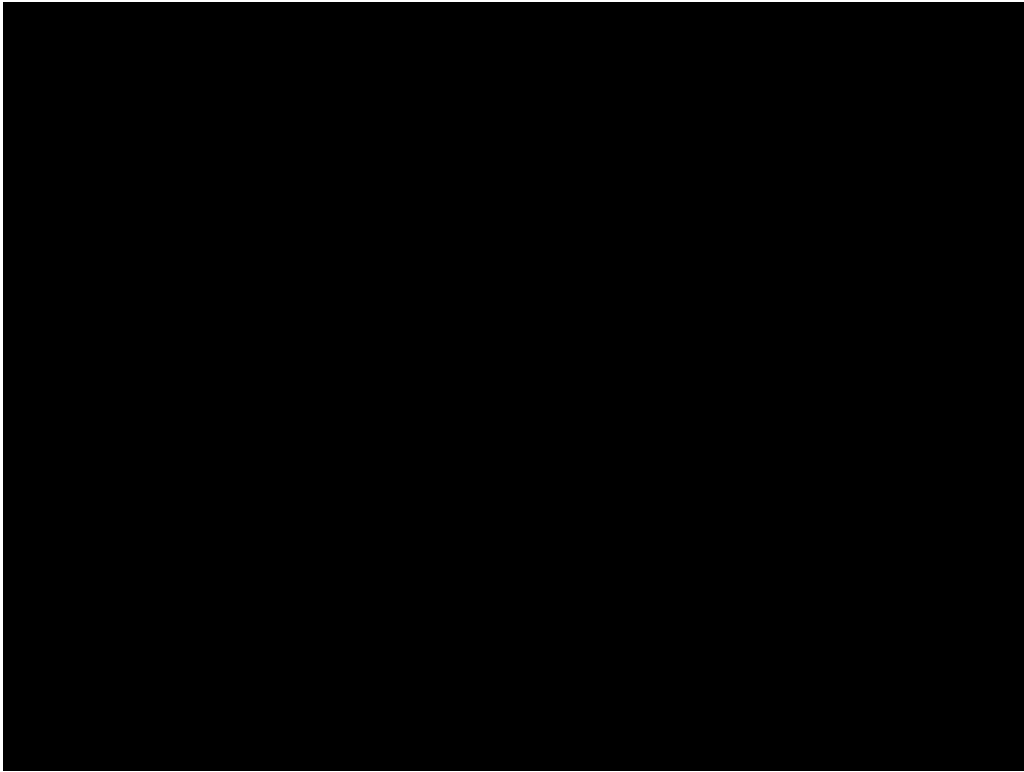
British Match.com ad



Zoosk.com ad



Love Guaranteed



Almost Love

Why Study Close Relationships?

Relationships are a crucial part of our lives.

- Loneliness is predictive of health problems and is associated with suicide.
- Close relationships are linked with psychological well-being.
- Our cultural folk sayings reflect this awareness: No person is an island.

Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

What is a relationship? Any ideas?



Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

A Relationship: Nuts and Bolts

- Requires interdependence

Mutual influence

Changes in one person lead to changes in the other person.

A system

- Interactions are necessary for a relationship, but we need more than that.

Shared understanding (schema, concept) of being in a relationship;
having memories of the past together

Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

A Relationship: Nuts and Bolts

- Must not be interacting in a social role:

Two people behave with each other in a way that is different from how they would behave with others.

The relationship is unique.



(Regan, 2011; Berscheid & Regan, 2016)

Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

A Relationship: Nuts and Bolts

What is a relationship? (Romantic relationships)

Uniqueness

The specific qualities of each person

The particular dynamics arise as partners (and their qualities) interact

Integration

Opportunities and interests to be interdependent

Greater likelihood of a blend in cognition, affect, and motivation

Trajectory

Partners continue to revise how they see experiences with their partner.

These perceptions impact how relationships change over time.



Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

Romantic relationships



May be sexual

Different expectations, dynamics, and norms than friendships

Can be committed or uncommitted

Choose them

Friendships



Choose them

Generally less structured than romantic relationships

May be sexual

Research in Psychology of Close Relationships

What does it mean to be close and intimate?

- Personal sense of being intimate

Feel close and connected

- Objective intimacy

How you behave and influence each other

Frequent

Strong

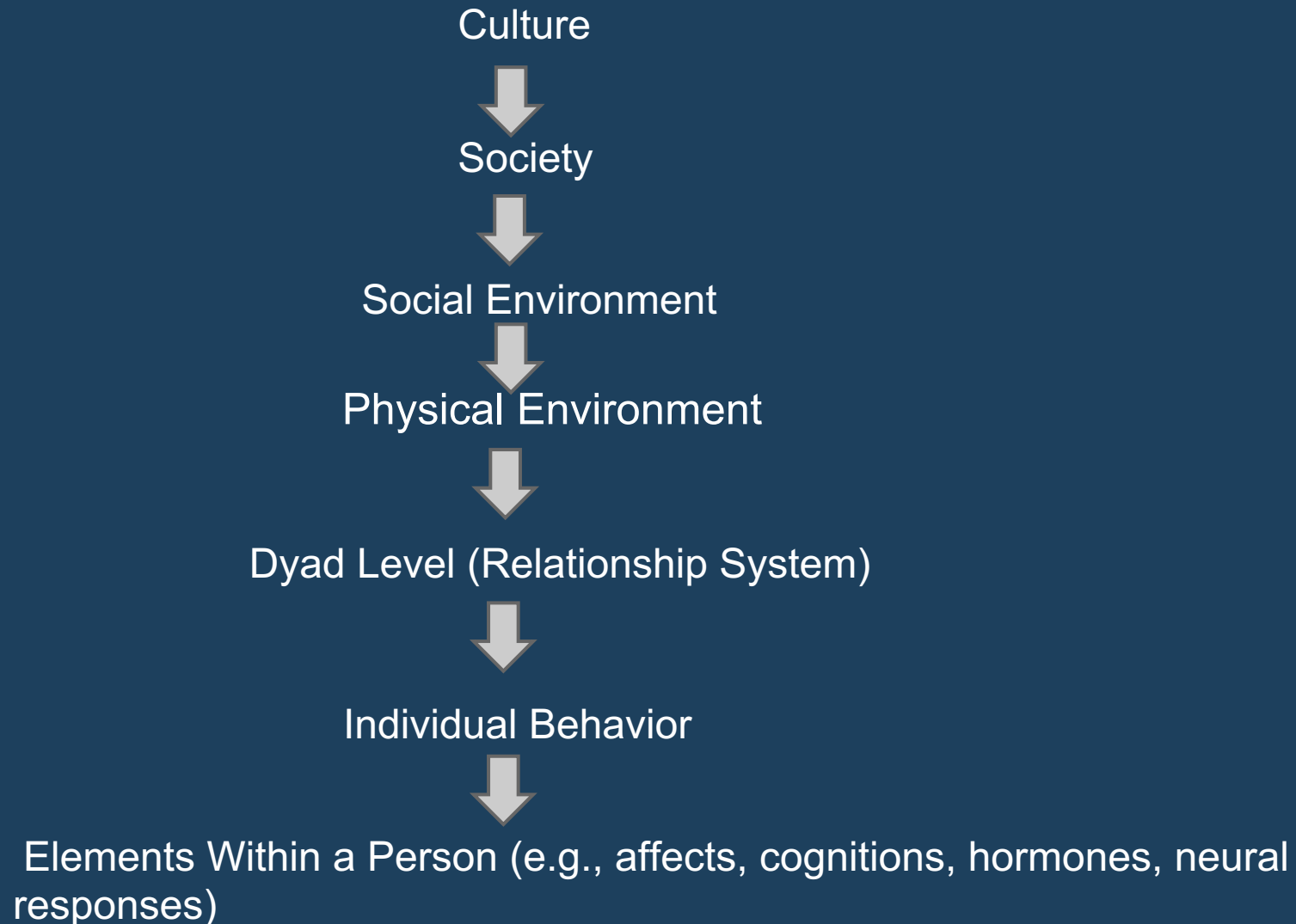
Diverse

Longer duration



Why is Relationship Science a Bit Tricky?

Relationships exist across multiple levels of analysis and are nested within other systems.



How Do We Do Relationship Research?

How to look at couples:

Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

Results of interactions in a dyad reflect:

Your own personal characteristics and behavior

Your partner's personal characteristics and behavior

Your thoughts, feelings, and behavior both influence and are influenced by the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of your partner.

X and X' = Something we would measure about Person A and Person B that would predict Y and Y'

Y and Y' = Outcomes of an interaction for Person A and Person B

How Do We Do Relationship Research?

Meet Josh and Heidi

X = Heidi's characteristic

X' = Josh's characteristic

Y = Heidi's reaction

Y' = Josh's reaction

a = actor effects

p = partner effects

How Do We Do Relationship Research?

(a)
*Josh's impulsivity -----> Josh's reduced marital satisfaction with Heidi

(a)
*Heidi's impulsivity-----> Heidi's reduced marital satisfaction with Josh

(p)
*Josh's impulsivity-----> Heidi's reduced marital satisfaction with Josh

(p)
*Heidi's impulsivity-----> Josh's reduced marital satisfaction with Heidi

(Regan, 2011; Cook & Kenny, 2005; Tan et al., 2017)

Impulsivity has been operationalized as an inability to inhibit responses, a preference for immediate gratification, and the tendency to engage in behaviors without fully evaluating context or situations.

You can also look at interaction effects here, such as actor partner interactions of impulsivity. For instance, perhaps two highly impulsive partners might really struggle, or maybe they'd do better because they're both compatible. Tan and colleagues didn't find an interaction effect here.

Ethics in Relationship Research

- Informed Consent

Participants understand what they're agreeing to do

Purpose of the research

Privacy rights

Possible benefits and risks

- Potential Long-Term Impacts

When people critically examine their own and their partner's thoughts and feelings, relationships have the potential to be strengthened or weakened.

- Researchers aren't therapists, and that line needs to be clear.

Thank you for your time, and welcome again!

We look forward to getting to know you! 😊



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