

The Relationality of Feelings

A Cultural Comparison of Affective Patterns
in Western and East-Asian Relationships

Alexander Kirchner-Häusler

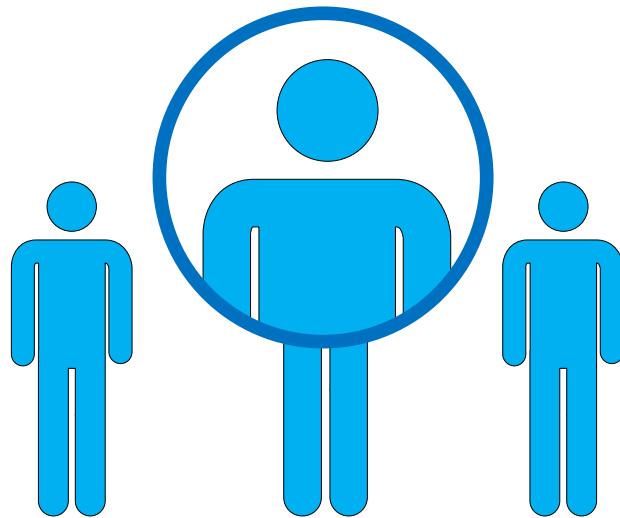
University of Kent



**Emotions arise and unfold
between people,
and fit and support cultural
ideas about relationships.**

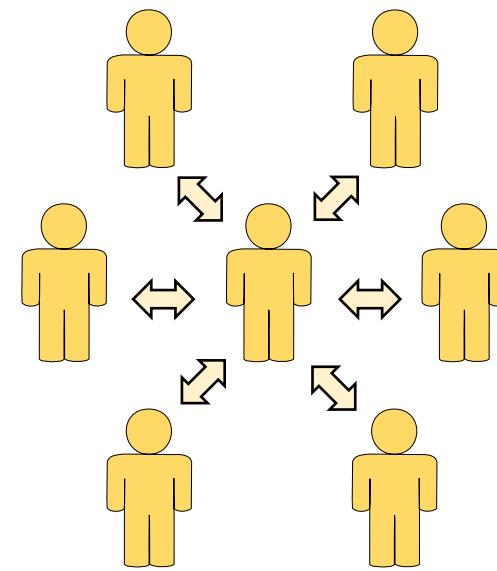
Different ideas about relationships

Western Cultures



Autonomy
Individual Needs
Self-Esteem & Mutual Affirmation

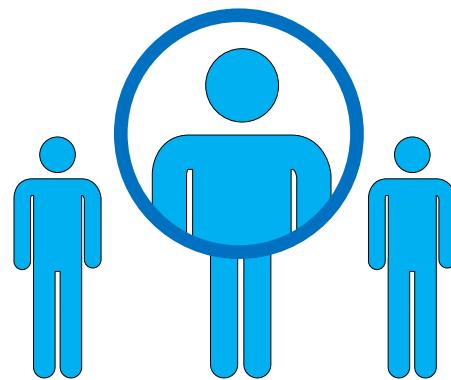
East-Asian Cultures



Relatedness
Social Harmony
Adjustment & Perspective Taking

Emotions fit cultural relationship models

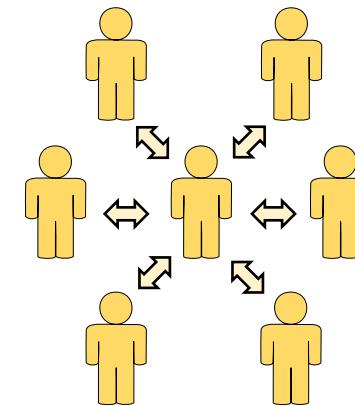
Western Cultures



More **autonomy-promoting** emotions
(e.g. anger, pride)

Maximization of positive over negative feelings

East-Asian Cultures



More **relationship-promoting** emotions
(e.g. shame, sympathy)

Greater **balance** of positive and negative feelings

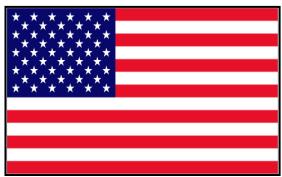


Can we find cultural
differences in emotional
experience in social
situations?

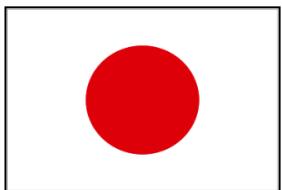
“Humiliated Fury”

**Shame as a painful experience
is transformed into more
acceptable Anger**

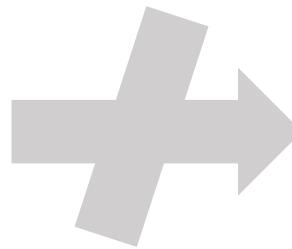
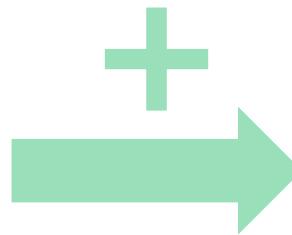
Study 1: Humiliated Fury



Self-Esteem
Autonomy
Personal Needs



Harmony
Connectedness
Self-adjustment



1

Daily Diary Study

- 31 and 55 participants
- 7-day sampling of interpersonal shame situations in daily life
- Ratings of anger and shame intensity for each situation



Section A

Em

ay encounter. We would like you to read each situation ca

erience a situation like this?

't were to happen – would lead most students

2	3	4
Somewhat likely		

How likely experience by most students?

I saw that someone had picture them.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

restaurant after his study p was supposed to have : people from the study eting by another hour.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

bers of her sorority. The did arrive, it did not look

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

2

Vignette Study

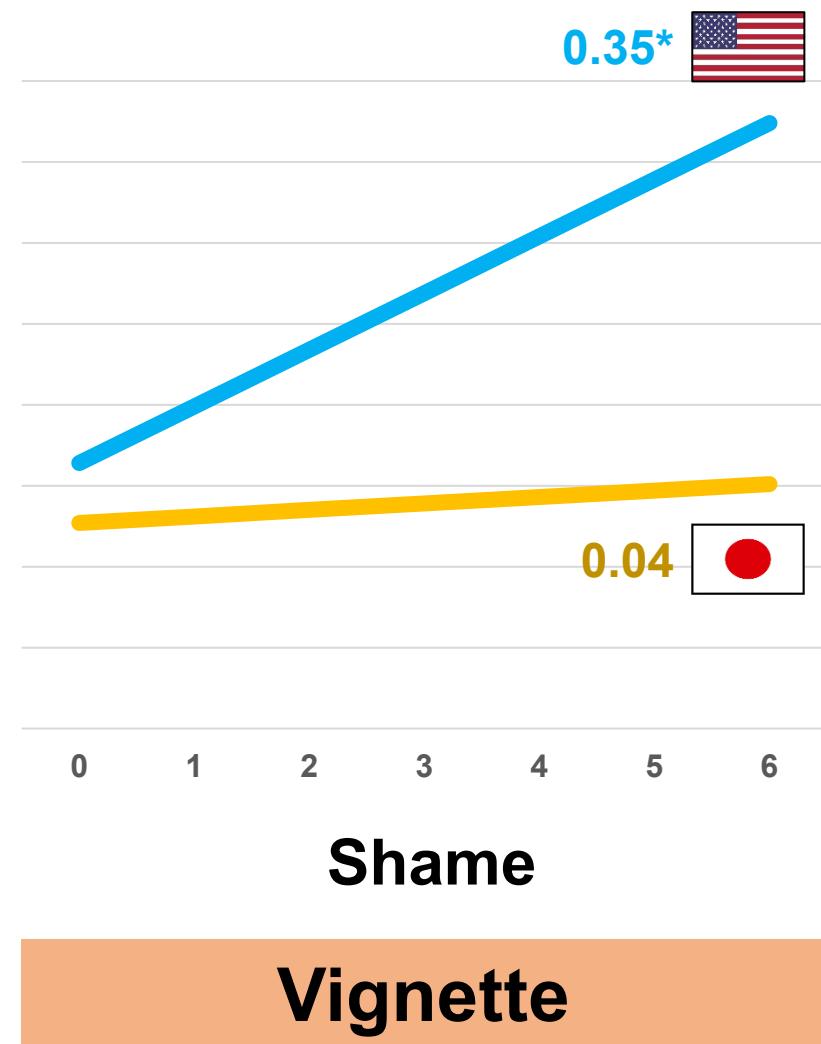
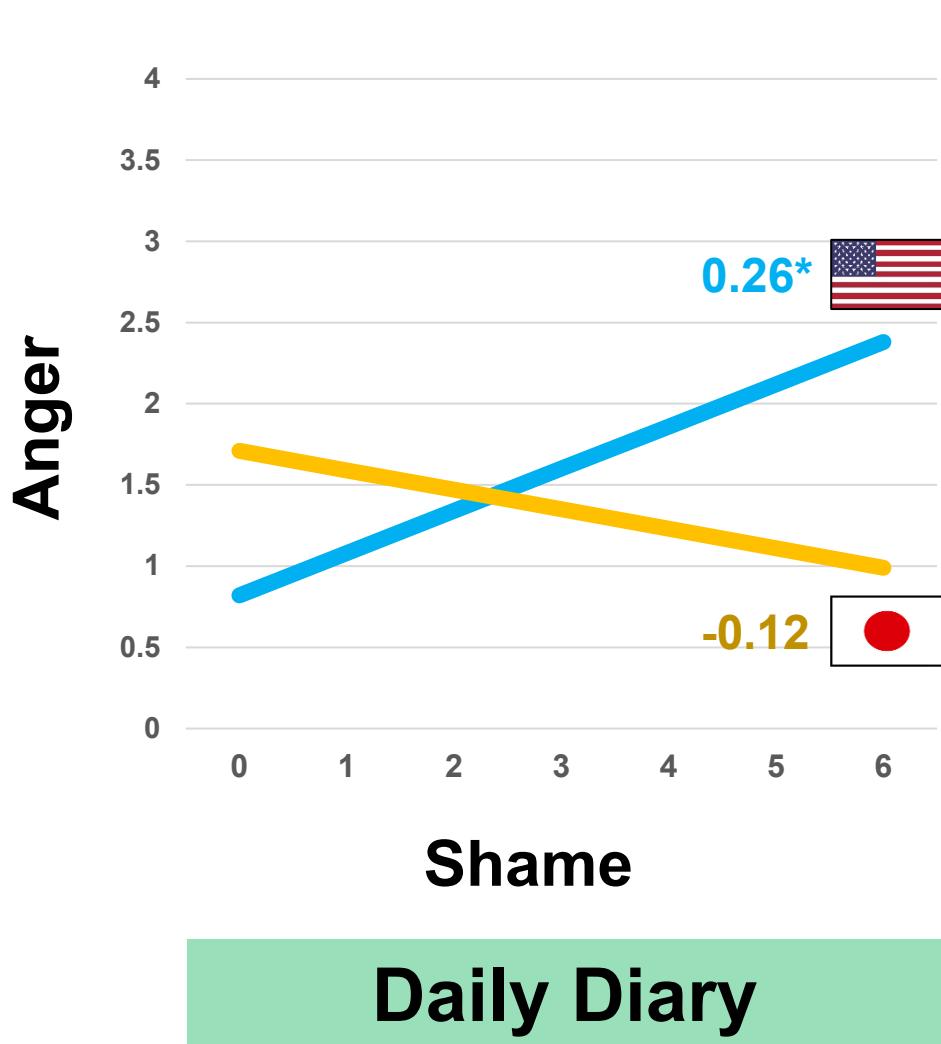
- 110 and 128 participants
- 10 situation vignettes with interpersonal shame situations
- Ratings of anger and shame intensity for each vignette

"Jessica had two overlapping classes and was therefore too late for her second class. The professor complained that she was late again and the entire room was looking at her."

U.S. individuals experience more anger in shame situations

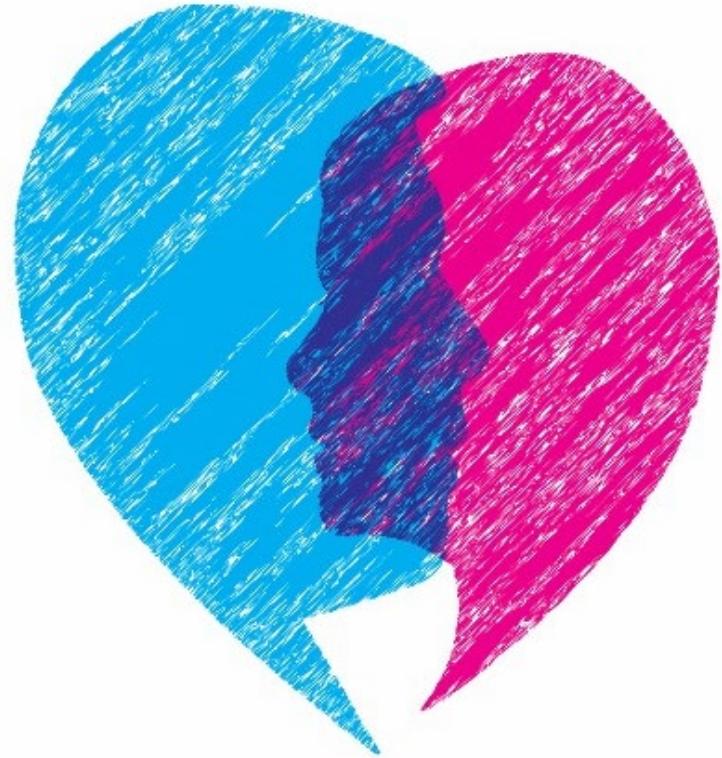


More shame predicts more anger for Americans, but not Japanese



**Feelings during
interpersonal
situations fit cultural
relationship models.**

The Couple Interaction Project



116 Belgians

58 Couples

KU LEUVEN

160 Japanese

80 Couples



- Heterosexual partners between 35-50 years old
- At least 2 years together and cohabiting
- Both born in Belgium / Japan
- Dutch / Japanese as a native language

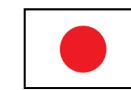
Age
Duration

Early 40s
~15 years

Married



72%



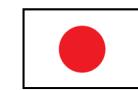
98%

SES

Upper
Middle



30%



10%

Middle

61%

64%

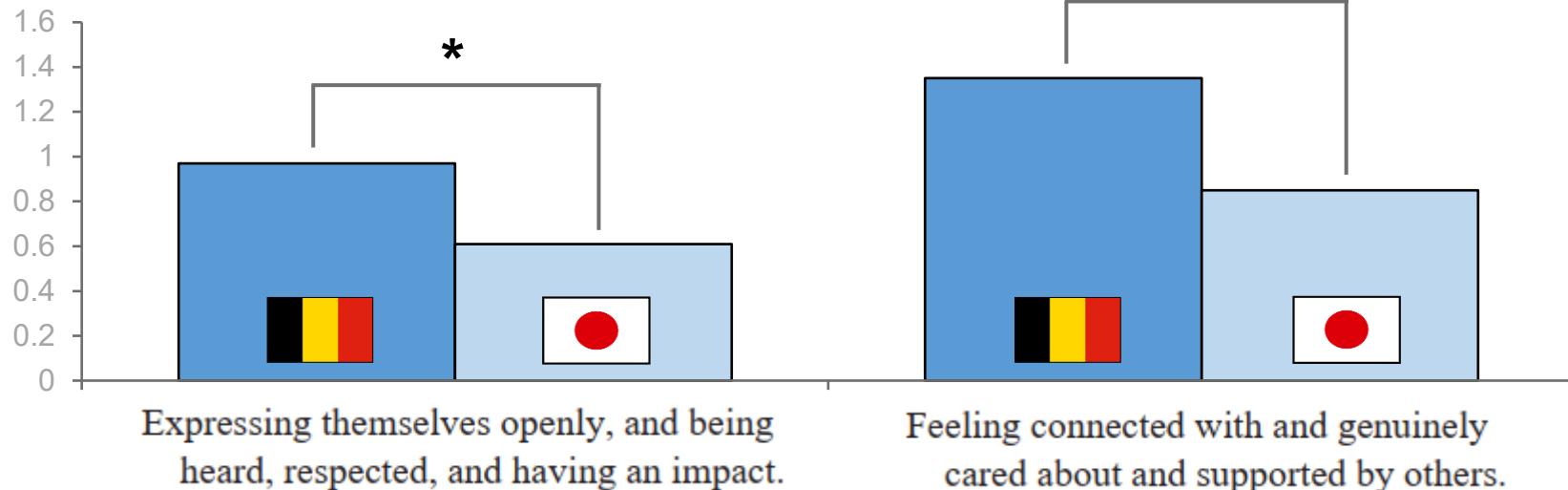
Lower
Middle

6%

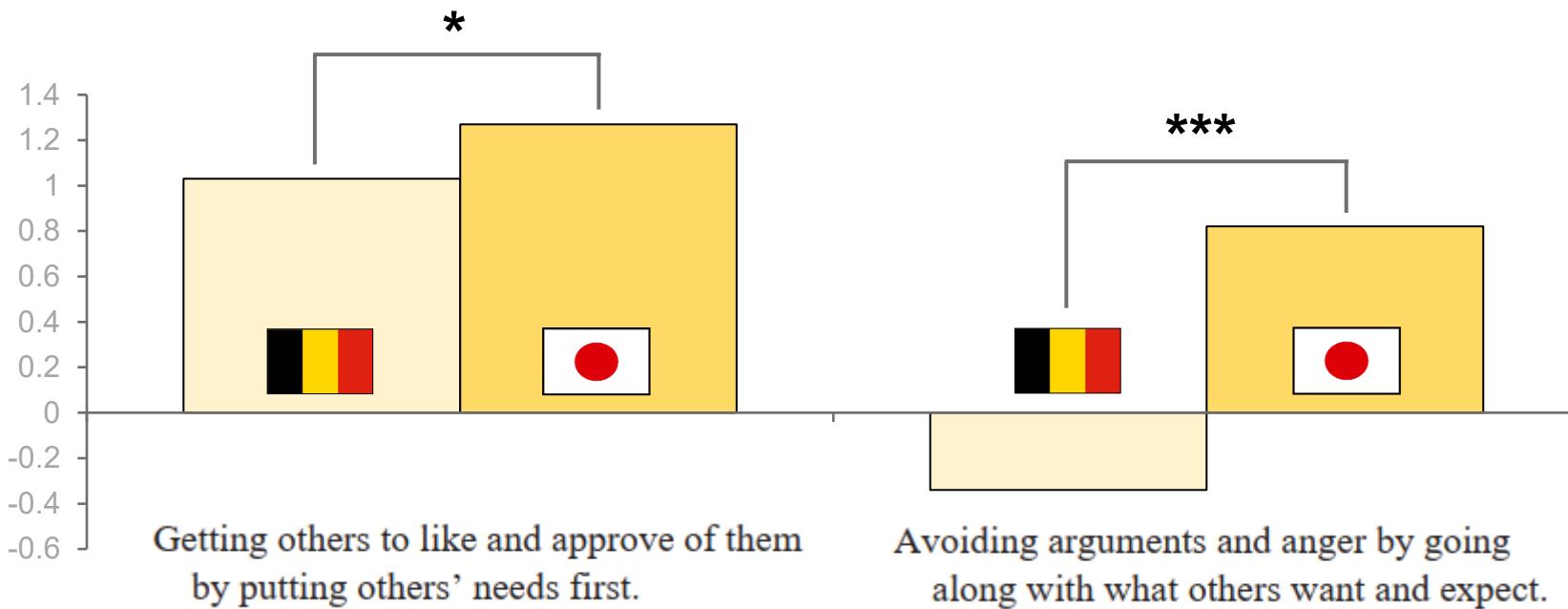
21%

The Couple Interaction Project

Endorsement



Endorsement



0

Preparatory Study

1

Pre-Visit Questionnaire (online & at home)

- Current areas of disagreement in couple
- Relationship satisfaction & other measures

2

10-minute disagreement interaction

- Topic chosen from list of areas of disagreement
- All interactions were videotaped

3



Belgian Lab



Japanese Lab

Different topics in the two cultures

Topic		Percent
Relations with in-laws, family, or neighbors		15.52%
Communication (e.g. not listening to each other)		13.79%
Children (e.g. whether or not to have children, how to raise children)		10.34%
Convictions, beliefs (e.g., religion, politics, or other things believed important)		8.62%
Work (e.g. time spent at work, career decisions)		8.62%

Topic		Percent
Money or possessions relevant to your relationship (e.g. house, mortgage, car)		20.00%
Health (e.g. alcohol, drugs)		12.50%
Personal habits, characteristics, or behavioural tendencies (e.g. looks, fashion sense, diet, always showing irritation)		12.50%
Leisure time interests or activities		11.25%
Children (e.g. whether or not to have children, how to raise children)		8.75%

0

Preparatory Study

1

Pre-Visit Questionnaire (online & at home)

- Current areas of disagreement in couple
- Relationship satisfaction, Self-Construal, ...

2

10-minute disagreement interaction

- Topic chosen from list of areas of disagreement
- All interactions were videotaped

3

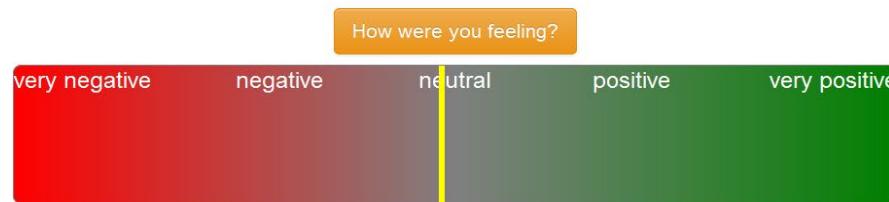
Post Interaction Assessment (VMR)

- Second-by-second affect ratings of disagreement interaction

The Couple Interaction Project



Move the slider to the left and the right to indicate how your feelings during the conversation were changing. You do not need to click or keep the mouse button held down.



“Use the slider below the video to indicate how good or bad you were feeling during that conversation.”

(Scores ranging from -100 to +100)

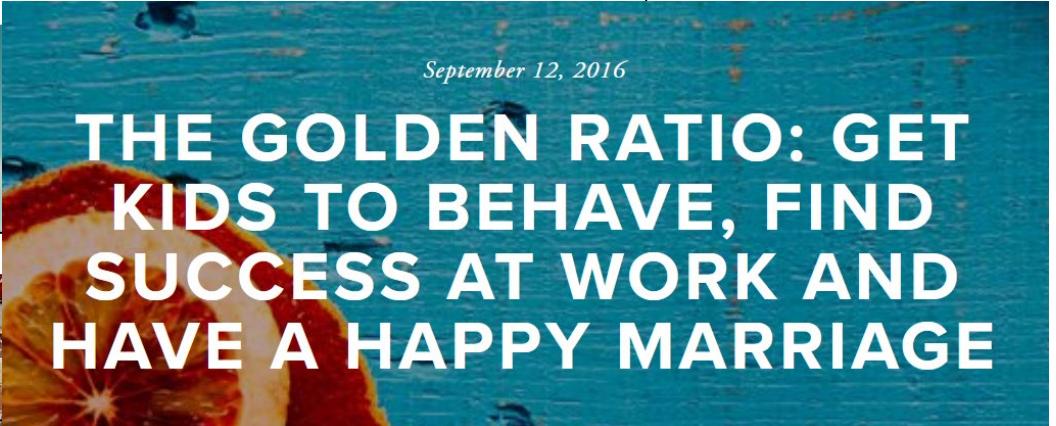


Are interactions in
stable relationships
marked by culturally fitting
feelings?

Study 2: The Ratio Study

5 TO 1: THE GOLDEN RATIO IN RELATIONSHIPS

If you want to stay together, remember this equation: Five good things for every bad one.

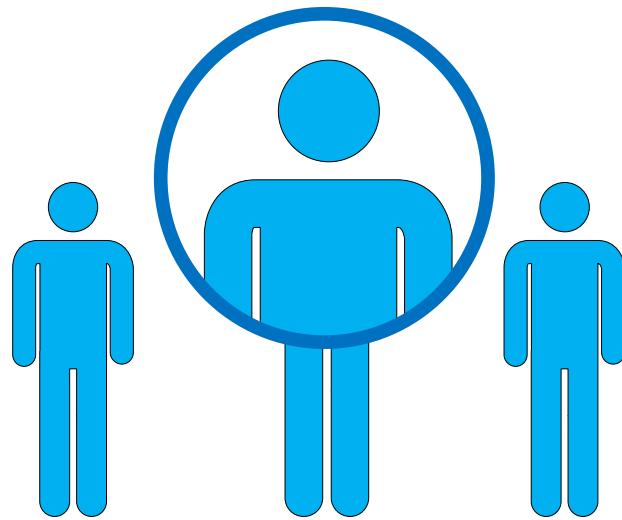


Mail Online



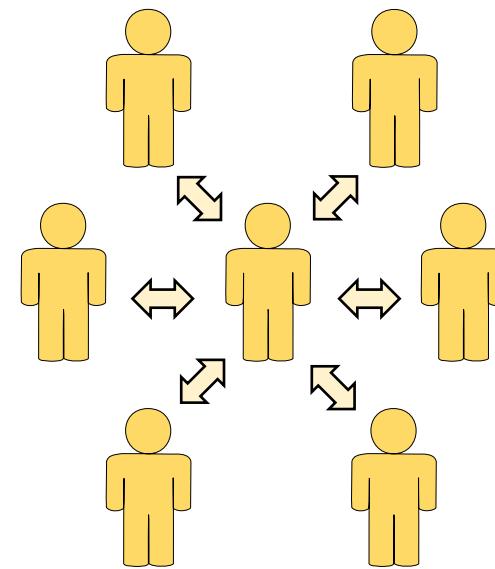
The secret to a happy marriage is the '5:1 ratio', expert reveals... so do you do this in your relationship?

Western Cultures



Maximization of positive over negative feelings

East-Asian Cultures



Greater **balance** of positive and negative feelings

Study 2: The Ratio Study

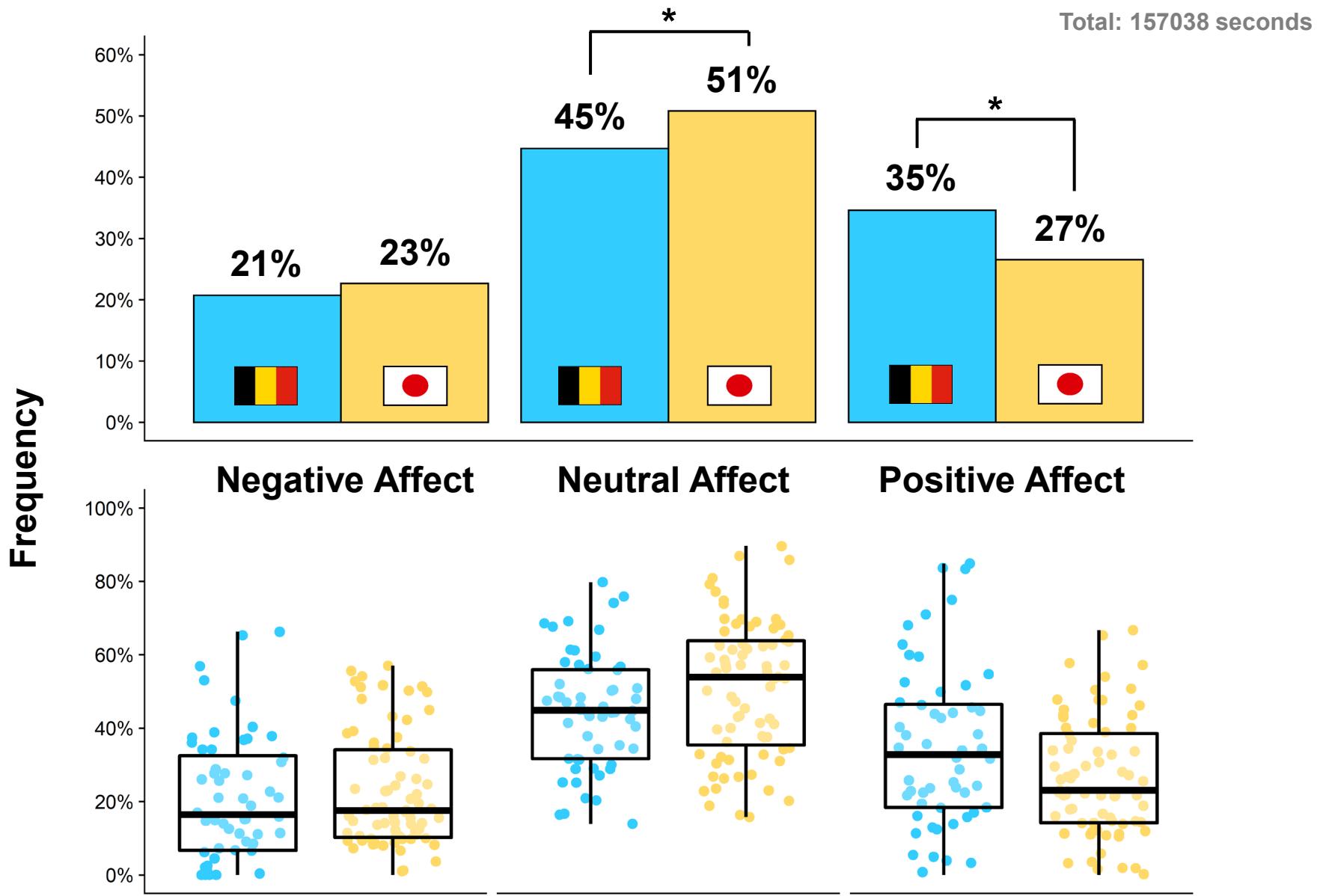


Study 2: The Ratio Study

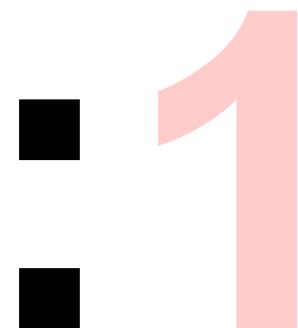
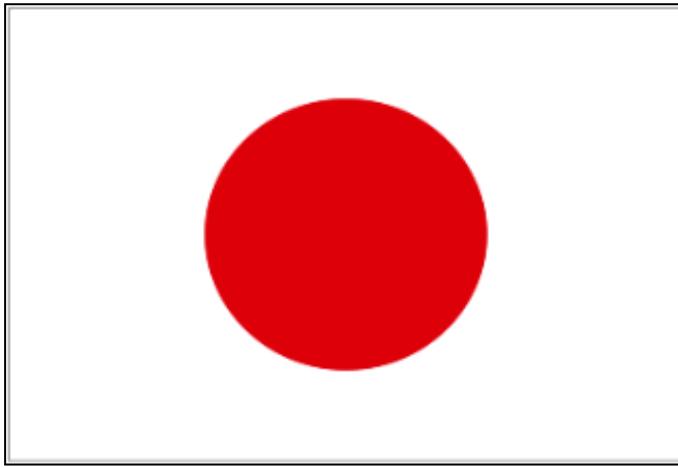
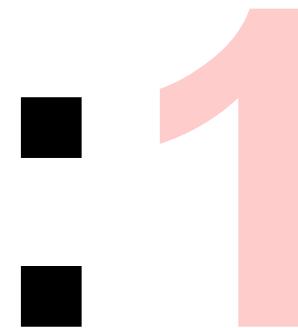


Couple
Affect
Ratio

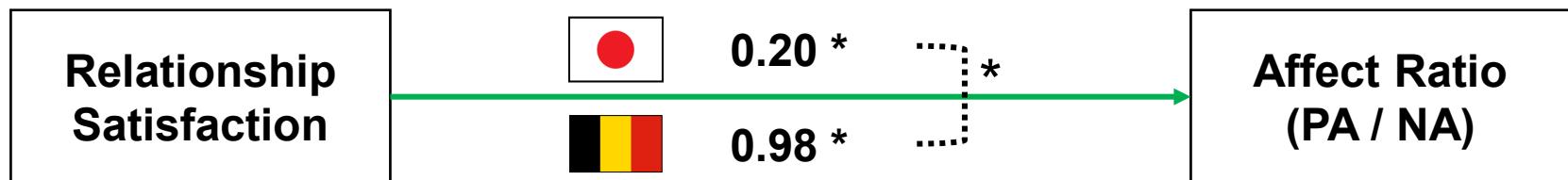
Study 2: The Ratio Study



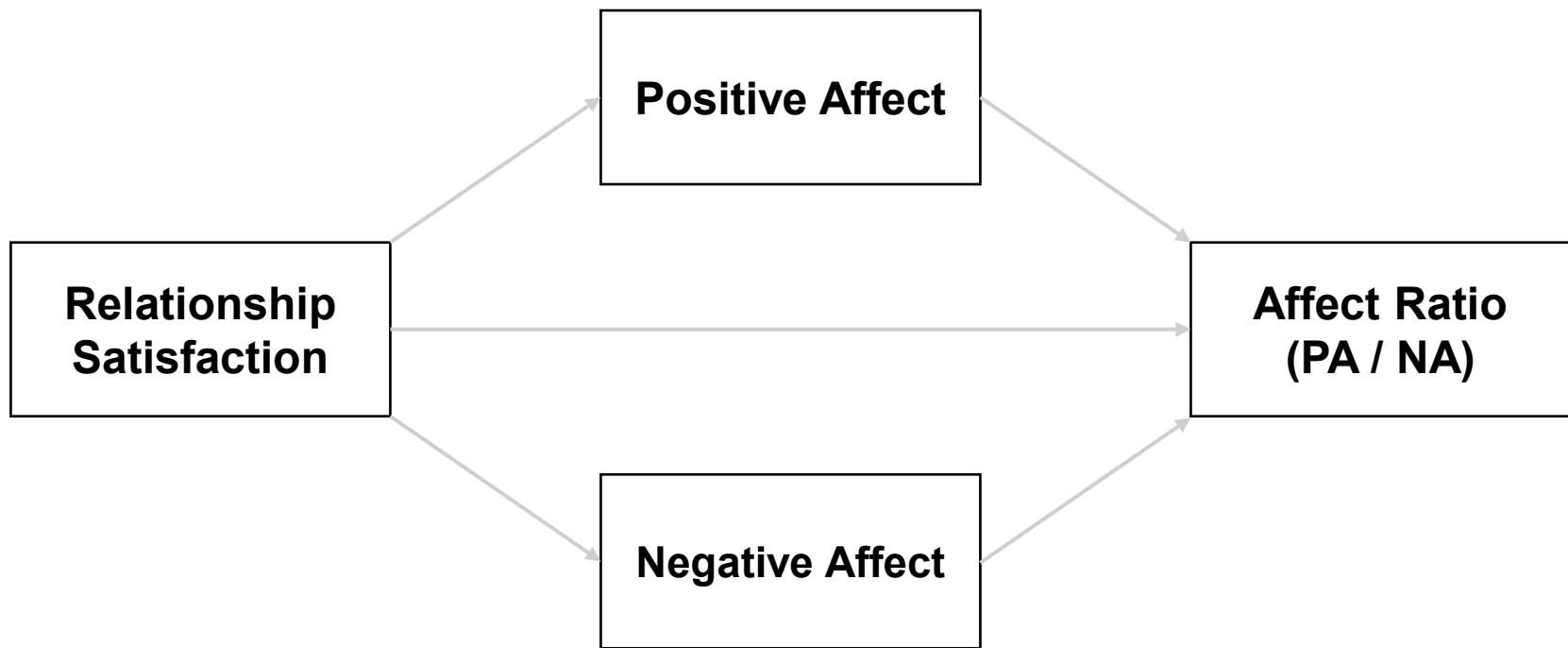
Study 2: The Ratio Study



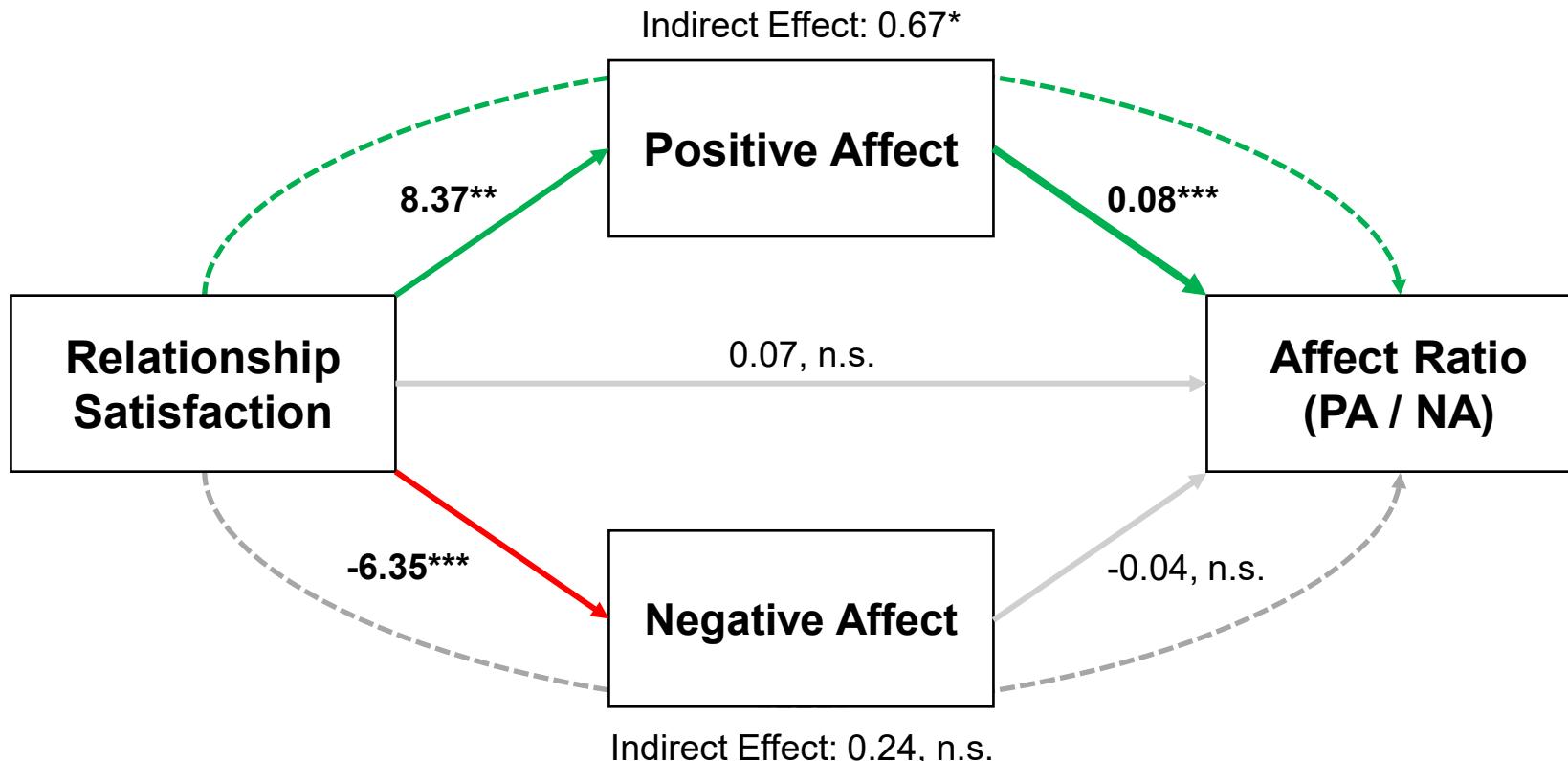
**More satisfied couples show more positive affect ratios,
but more so in Belgium than in Japan**



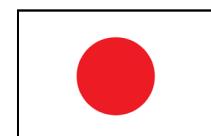
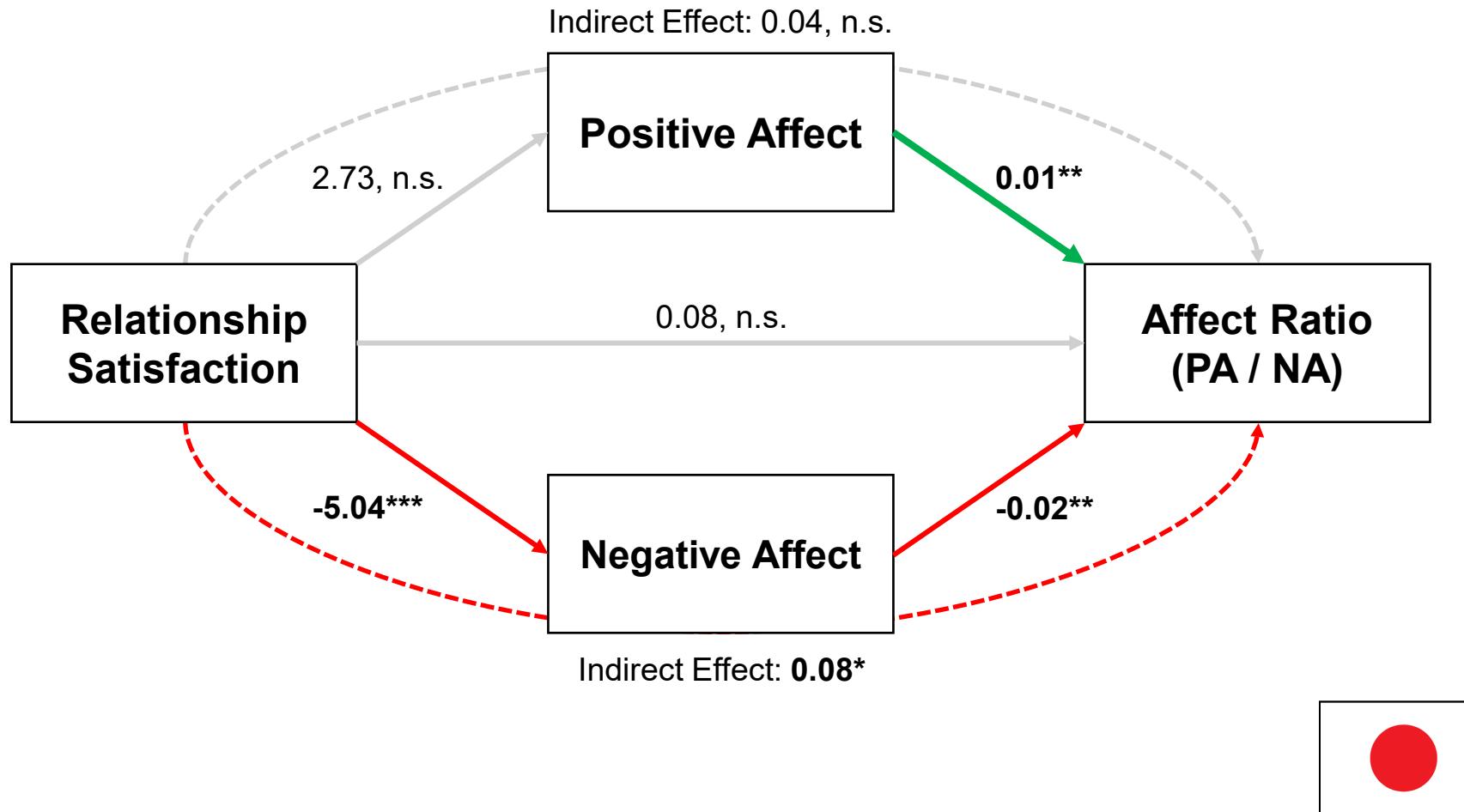
Study 2: The Ratio Study



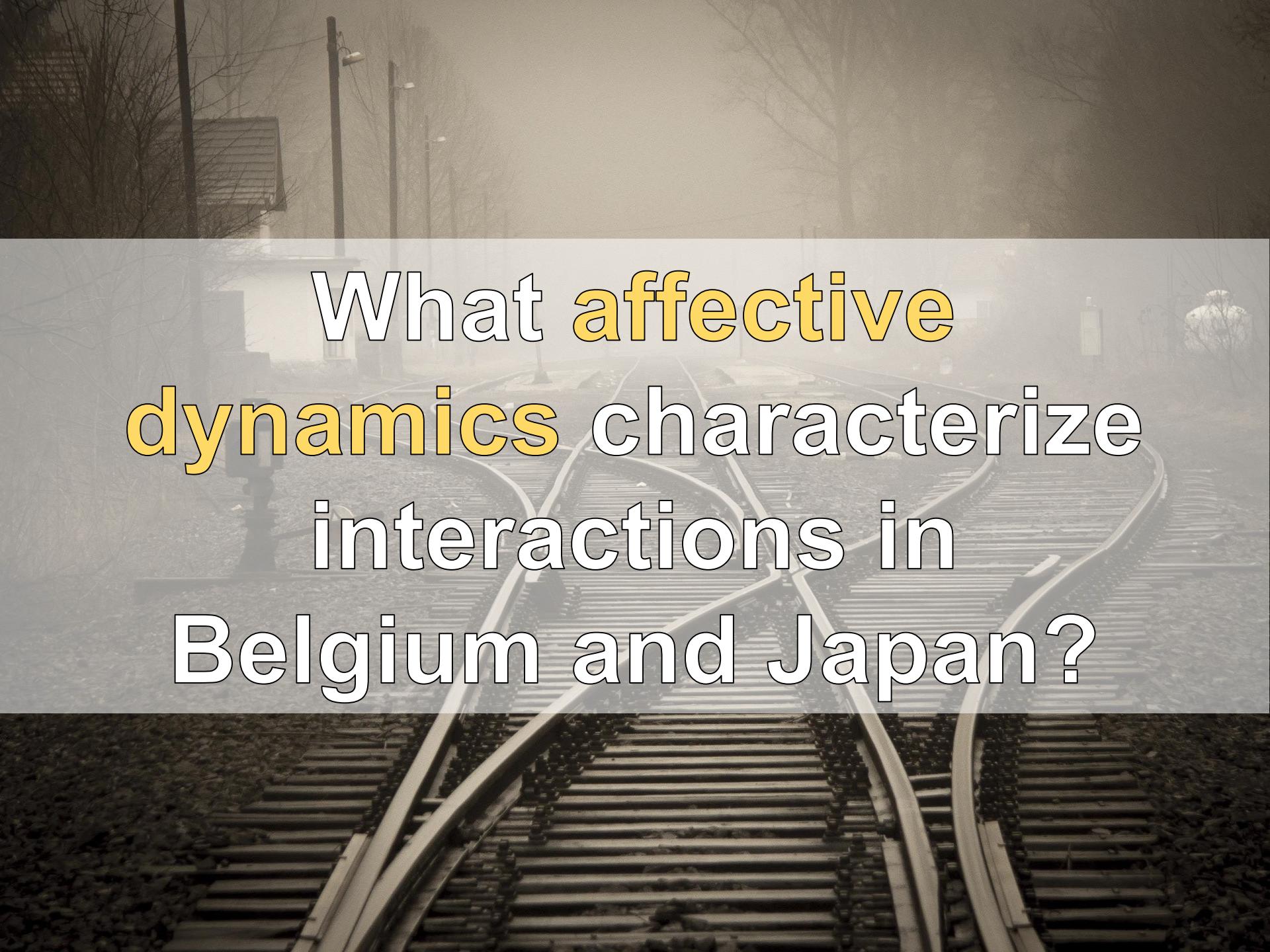
More satisfied Belgian couples show higher affect ratios due to more positive affect



More satisfied Japanese couples show higher affect ratios due to less negative affect



Couple interactions show feelings that fit cultural relationship models, and that are meaningfully linked to relational wellbeing.



What affective
dynamics characterize
interactions in
Belgium and Japan?

Time 1



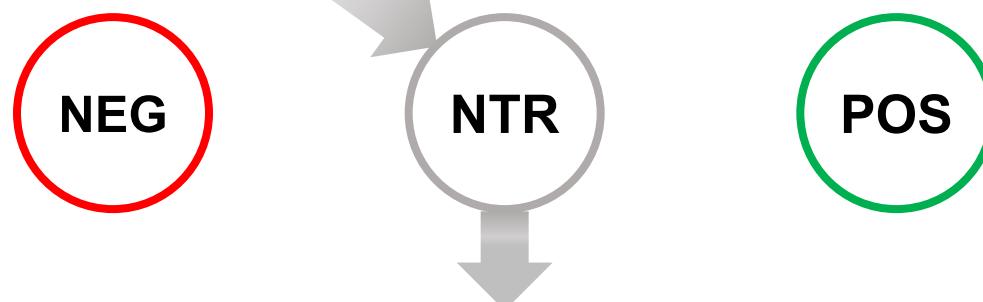
Time 2



Time 3



Time 4



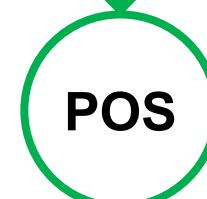
Time 1



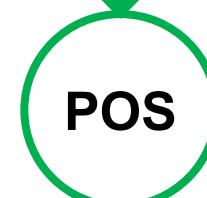
Time 2



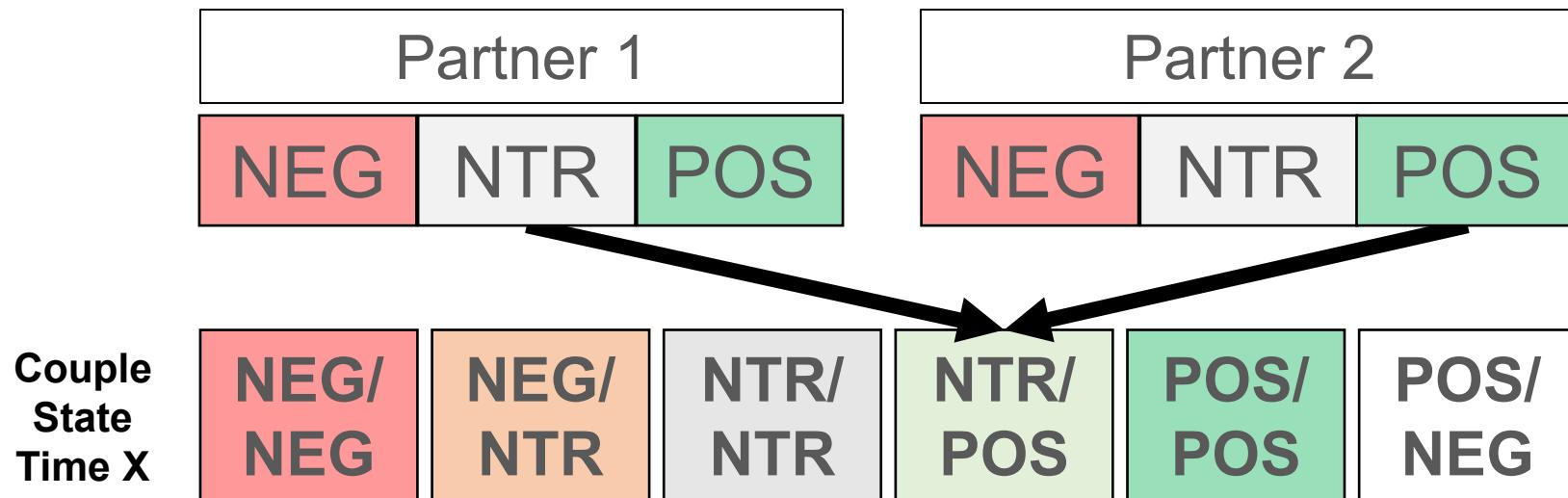
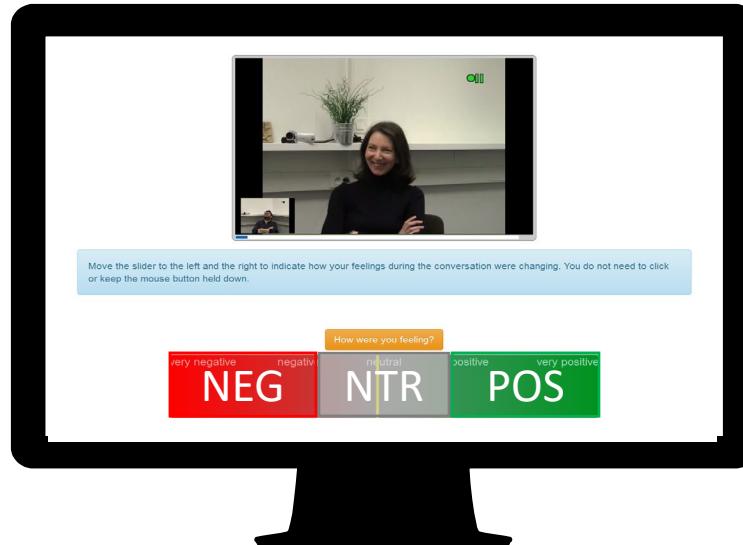
Time 3



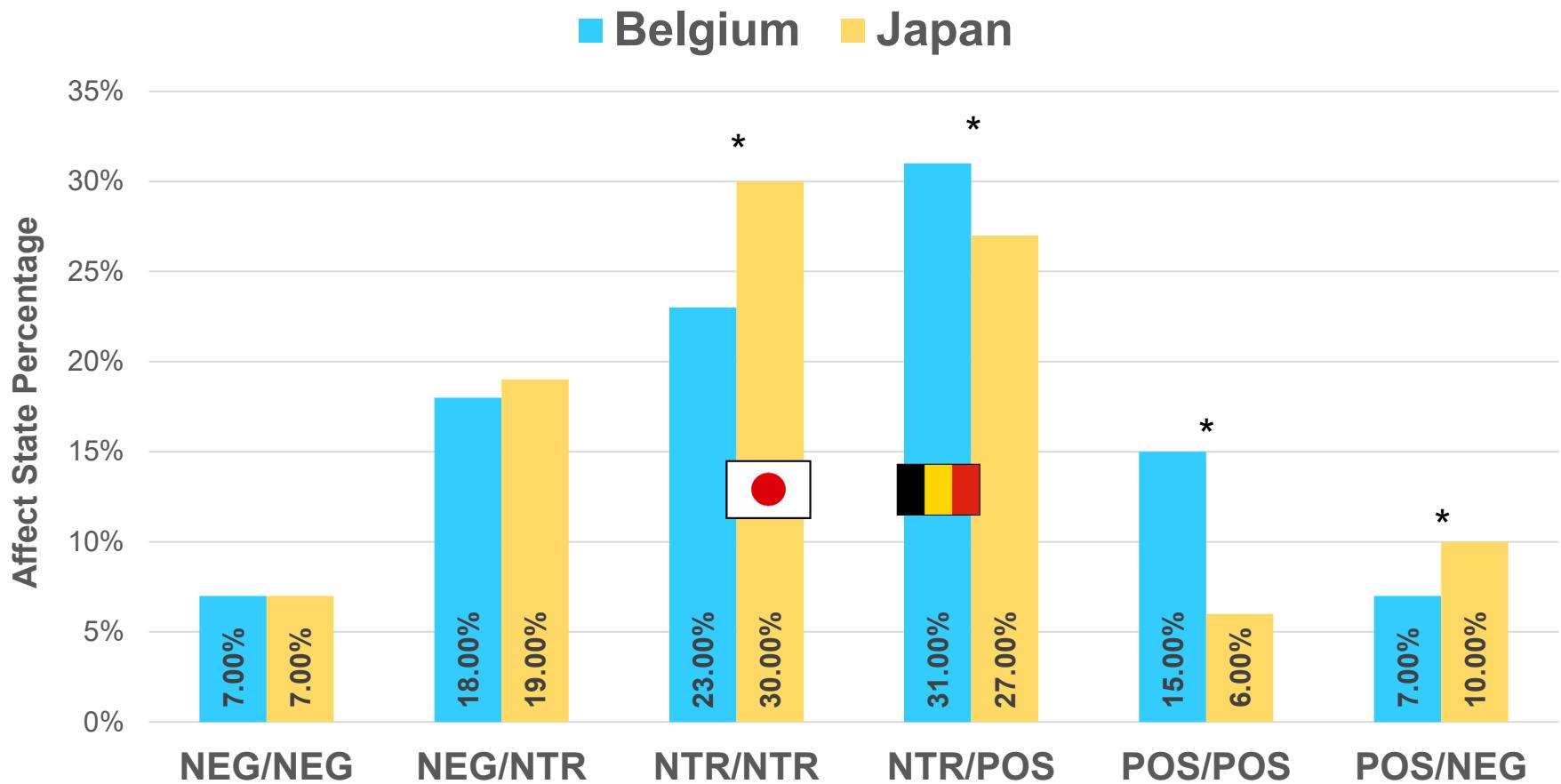
Time 4



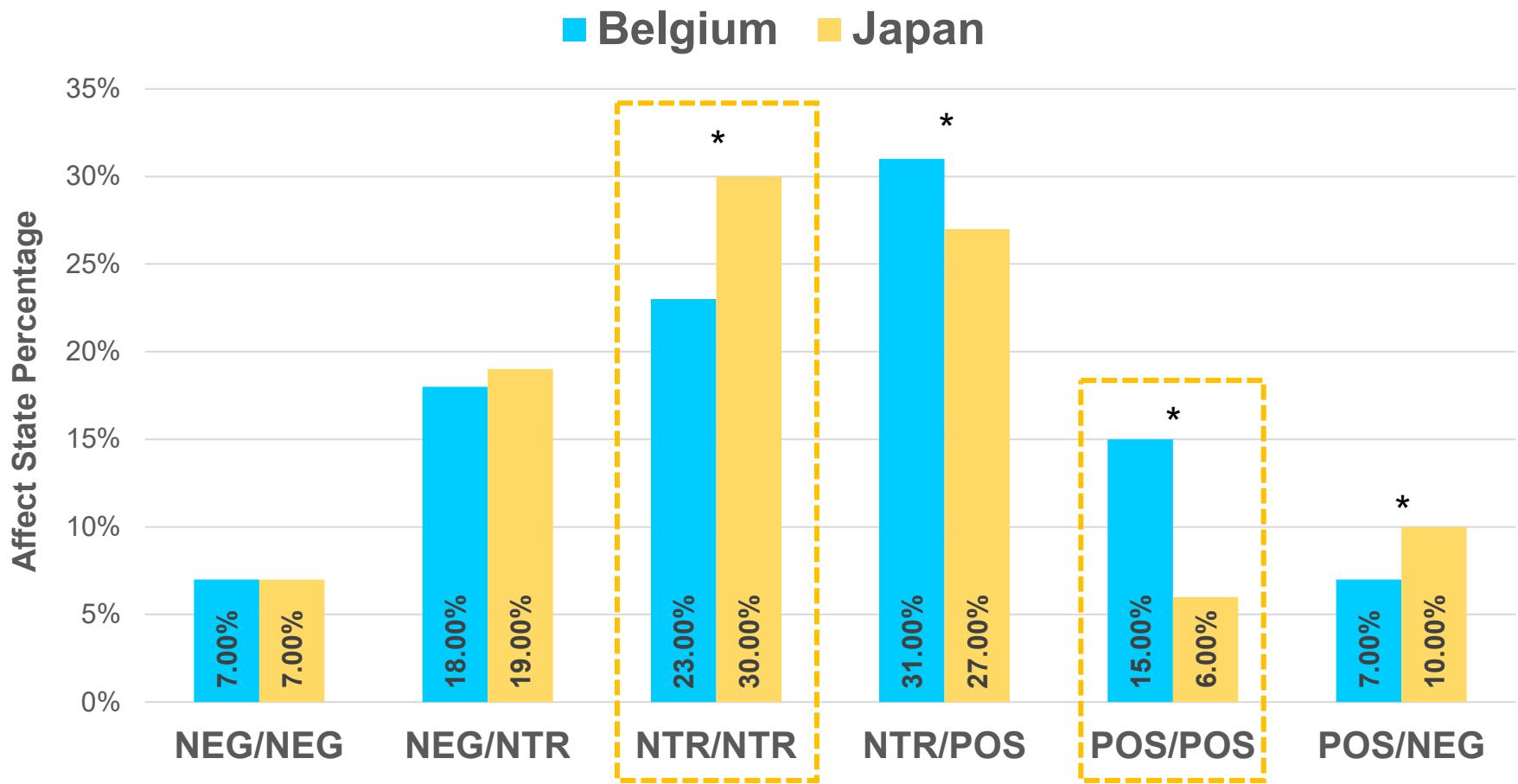
Study 3: Affective Dynamics

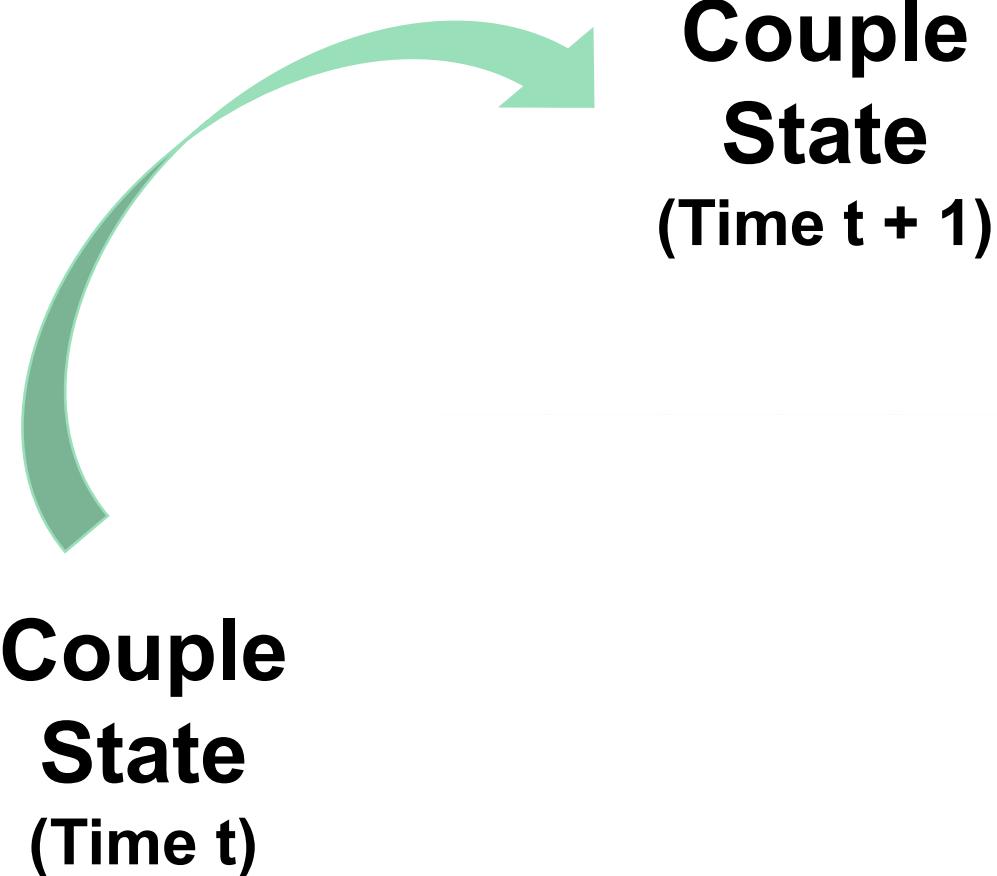


Study 3: Affective Dynamics



Study 3: Affective Dynamics

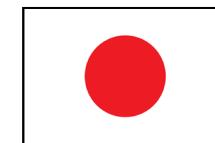




Study 3: Affective Dynamics



Time t+1



Time t

	NEG/ NEG	NEG/ NTR	NTR/ NTR	NTR/ POS	POS/ POS	POS/ NEG
NEG/ NEG	65%	24%	9%	1%	0%	1%
NEG/ NTR	10%	60%	20%	4%	0%	5%
NTR/ NTR	2%	16%	58%	20%	2%	2%
NTR/ POS	0%	4%	14%	66%	11%	5%
POS/ POS	0%	1%	4%	20%	73%	1%
POS/ NEG	3%	11%	4%	25%	2%	56%

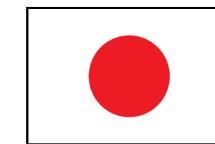
	NEG/ NEG	NEG/ NTR	NTR/ NTR	NTR/ POS	POS/ POS	POS/ NEG
NEG/ NEG	66%	26%	4%	0%	0%	3%
NEG/ NTR	8%	61%	20%	4%	0%	7%
NTR/ NTR	1%	13%	70%	14%	1%	1%
NTR/ POS	1%	3%	13%	68%	9%	7%
POS/ POS	0%	1%	7%	33%	53%	5%
POS/ NEG	3%	11%	4%	20%	2%	61%

Average transition probabilities per culture.

Study 3: Affective Dynamics



Time t+1



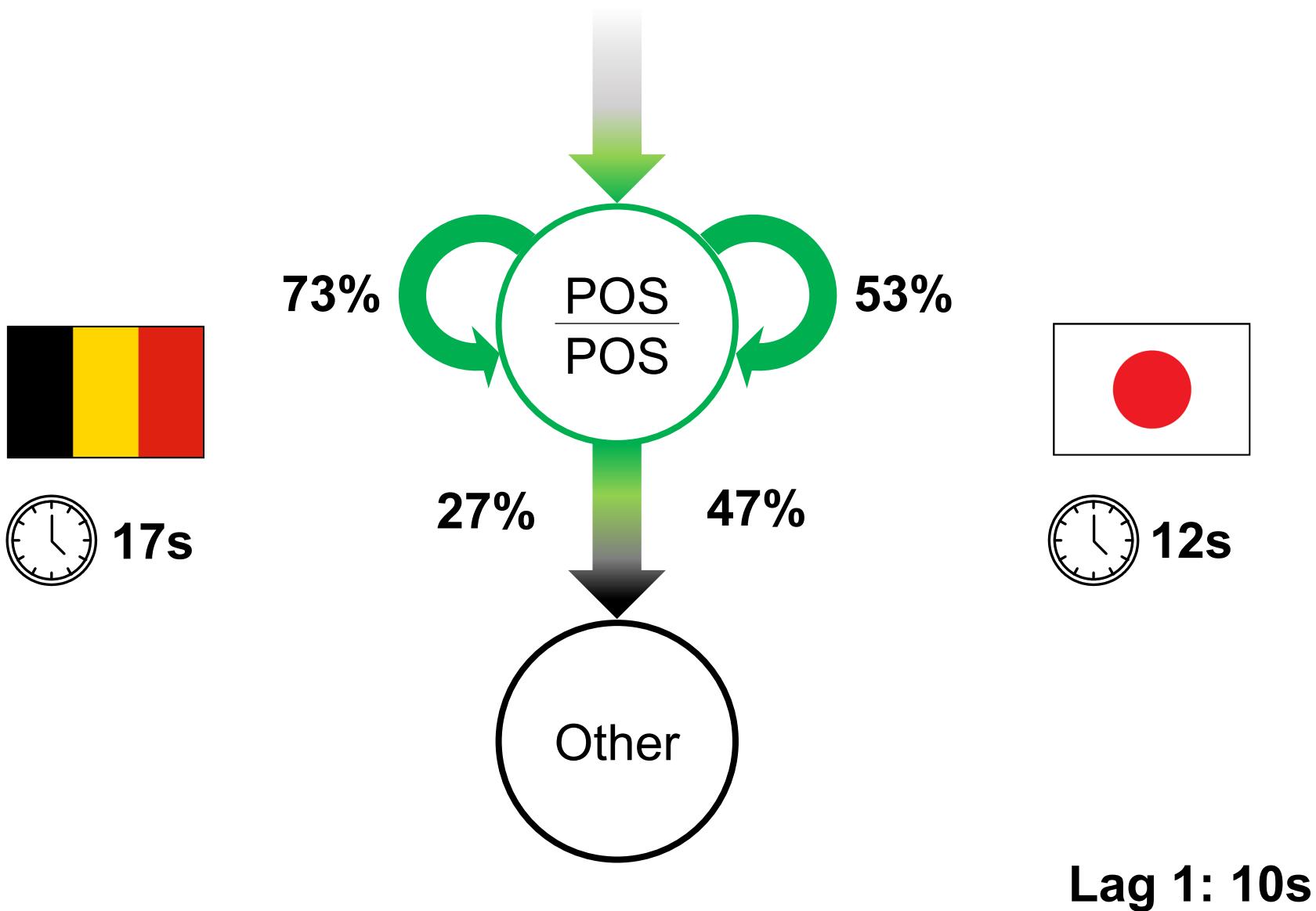
Time t

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POS/ NEG	3%	11%	4%	25%	2%	56%

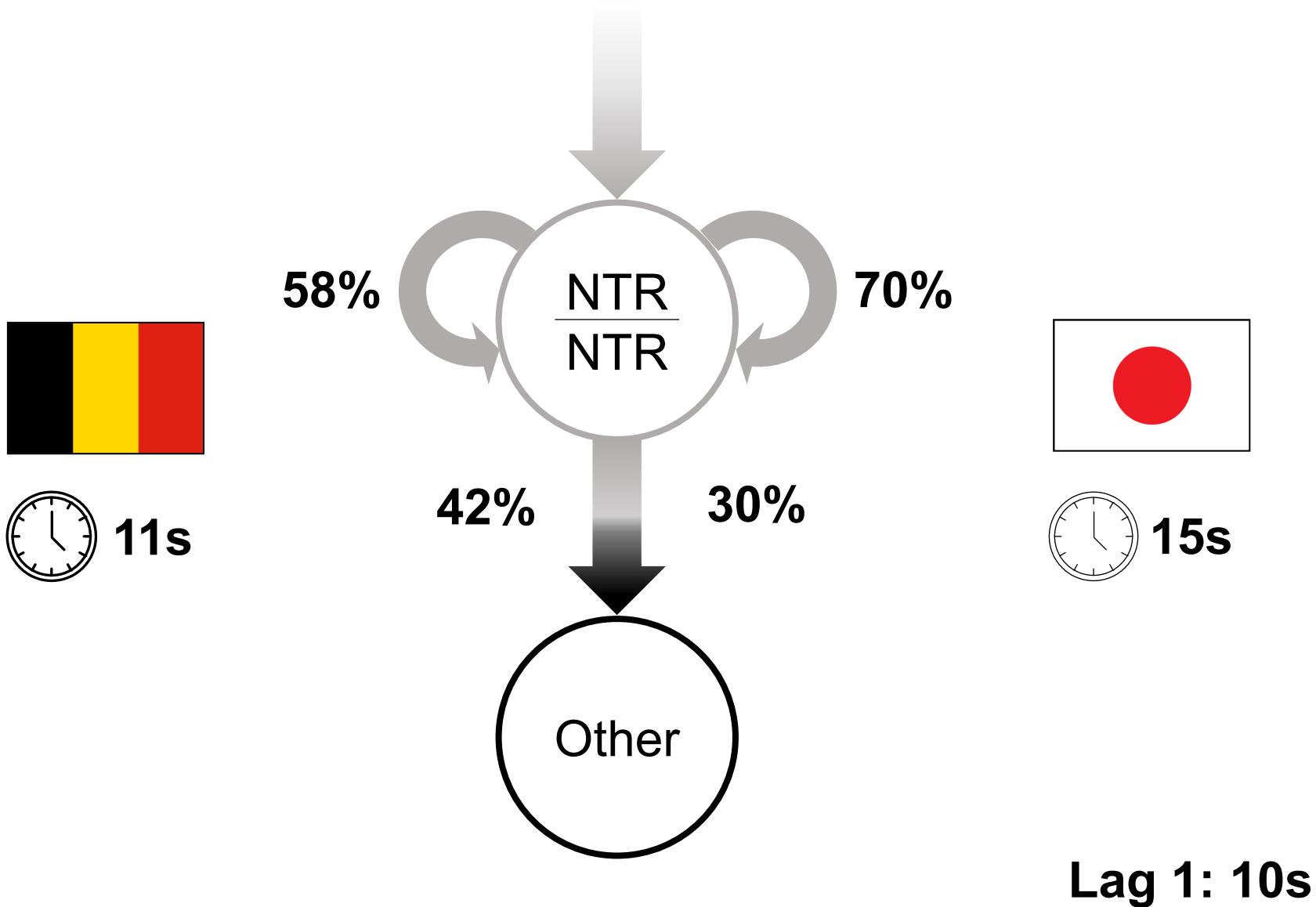
	NEG/ NEG	NEG/ NTR	NTR/ NTR	NTR/ POS	POS/ POS	POS/ NEG
NEG/ NEG	66%	26%	4%	0%	0%	3%
NEG/ NTR	8%	61%	20%	4%	0%	7%
NTR/ NTR	1%	13%	70%	14%	1%	1%
NTR/ POS	1%	3%	13%	68%	9%	7%
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Average transition probabilities per culture.

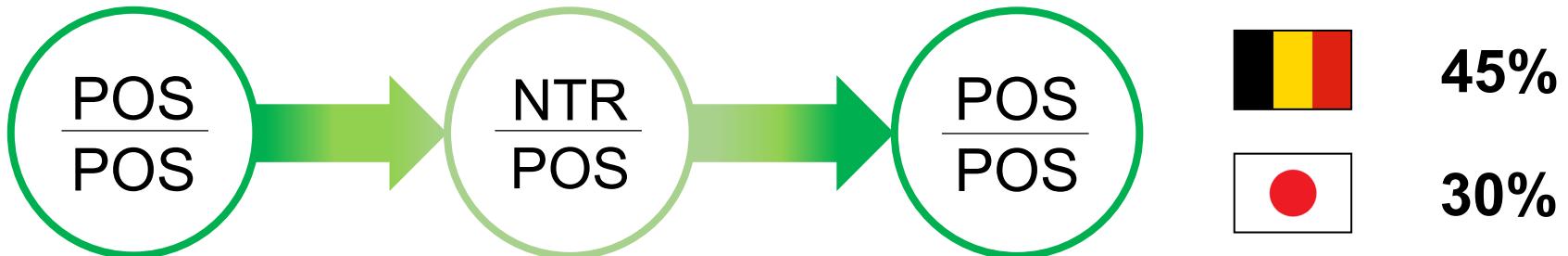
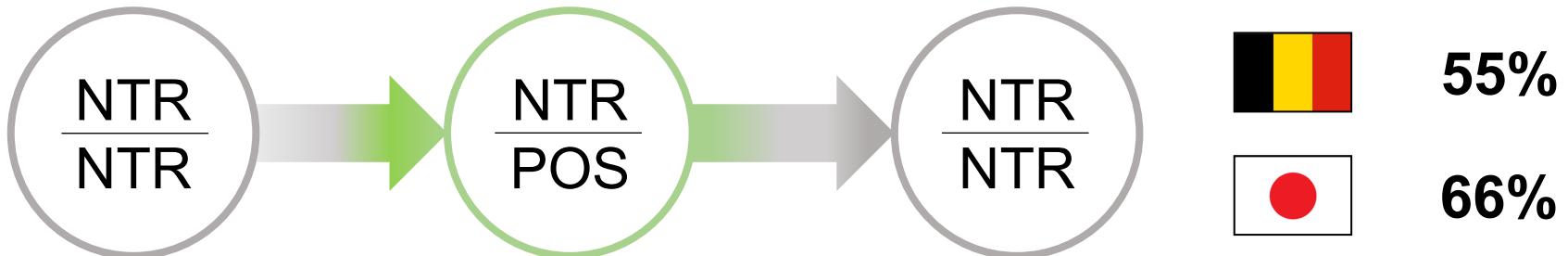
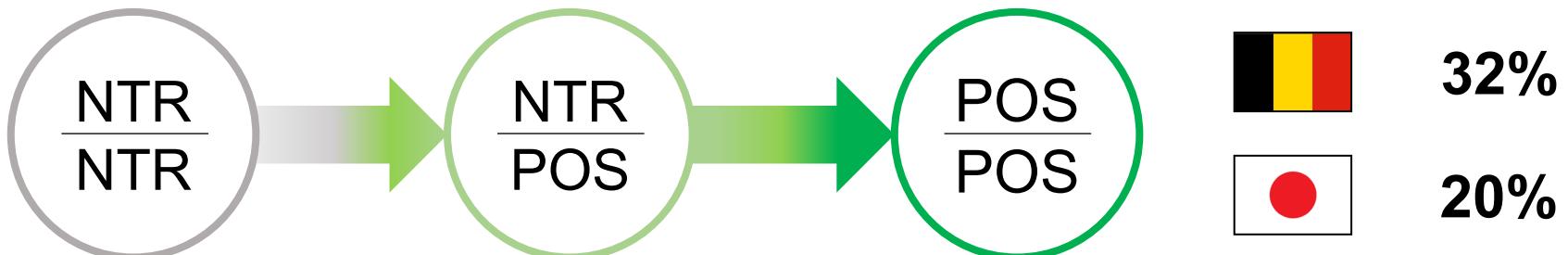
Study 3: Affective Dynamics



Study 3: Affective Dynamics

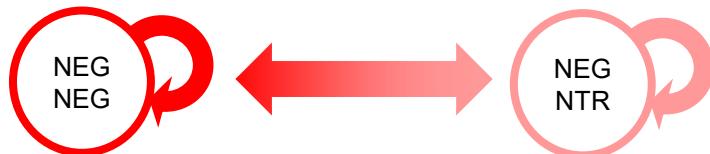


Study 3: Affective Dynamics

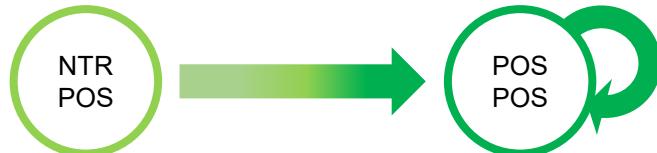


Lag 2: 20s

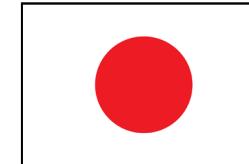
Relationship satisfaction



Less stability and transitions
of negative affect states



More transitions into, and
more stability of, shared
positive affect



Less stability and transitions
of negative affect states



More transitions out of
negative affect into shared
neutral affect

Dynamic patterns that afford more culturally valued feelings appear **more frequent**, and are tied to better functioning relationships.

1

Interactions in relationships were characterized by feelings that fit cultural ideas about relationships.

2

These cultural differences partly emerged over time in interactions.

3

Having more fitting affect and affect patterns was related to more satisfied relationships.

Thank you for your attention!

Collaborators



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