



Relationship satisfaction in first and higher order unions

Effects of his and her personality

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What makes partners happy?

Life stressors



Socio-demographic/cultural factors



Interpersonal processes



Psychological factors



Personality: The Big Five

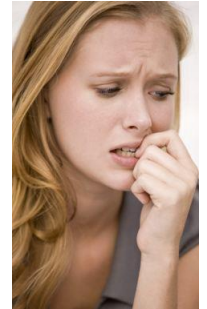
Extraversion (E)

Talkative
Energetic
Assertive
Enthusiastic



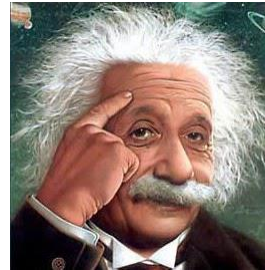
Neuroticism (N)

Negative affect
Anxious
Easily distressed

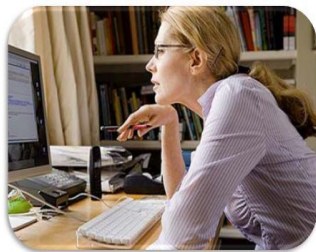


Openness to experience (O)

Imagination
Original
Intellect
Artistic



Conscientiousness (C)



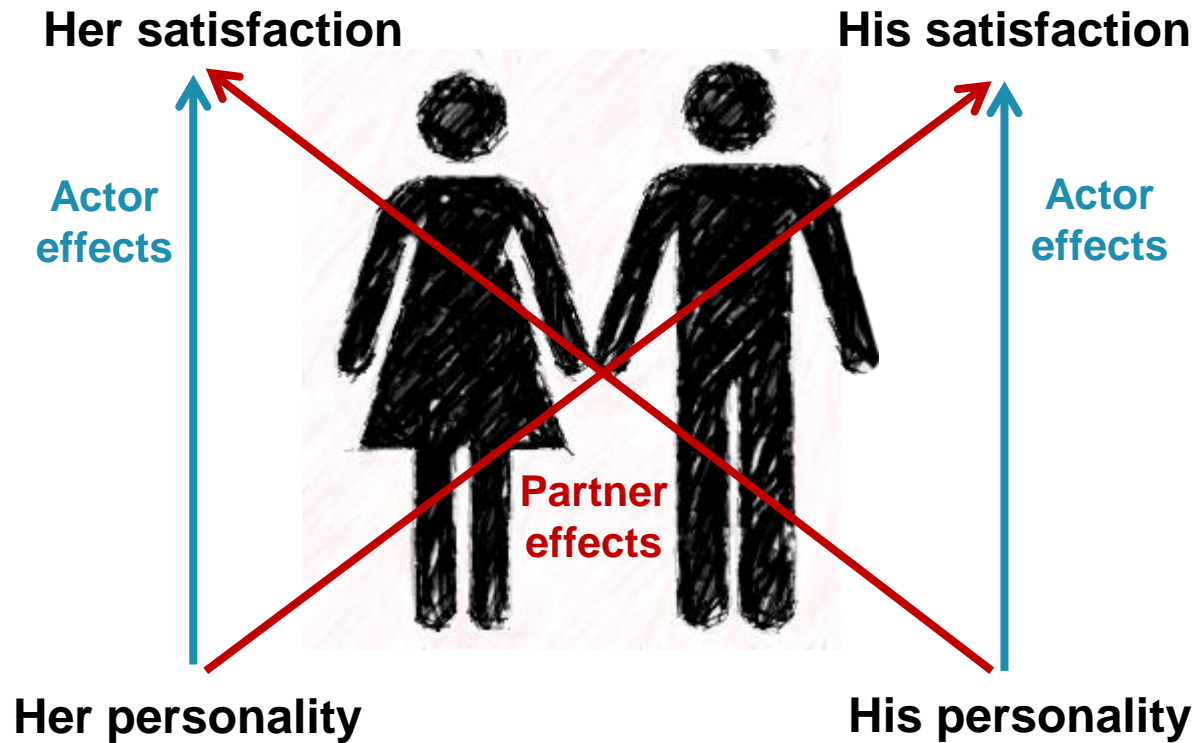
Efficiency
Order
Discipline
Goal-oriented

Agreeableness (A)





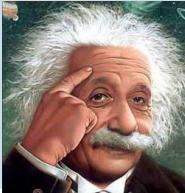


Empathetic
Altruistic
Helpful
Tender-minded

Actor and partner effects of P



P and relationship satisfaction

	Actor effects	Partner effects
Agreeableness 	positive	positive
Conscientiousness 	positive	positive
Neuroticism 	negative	negative
Extraversion 	unclear	negative
Openness 	Positive / unclear	unclear

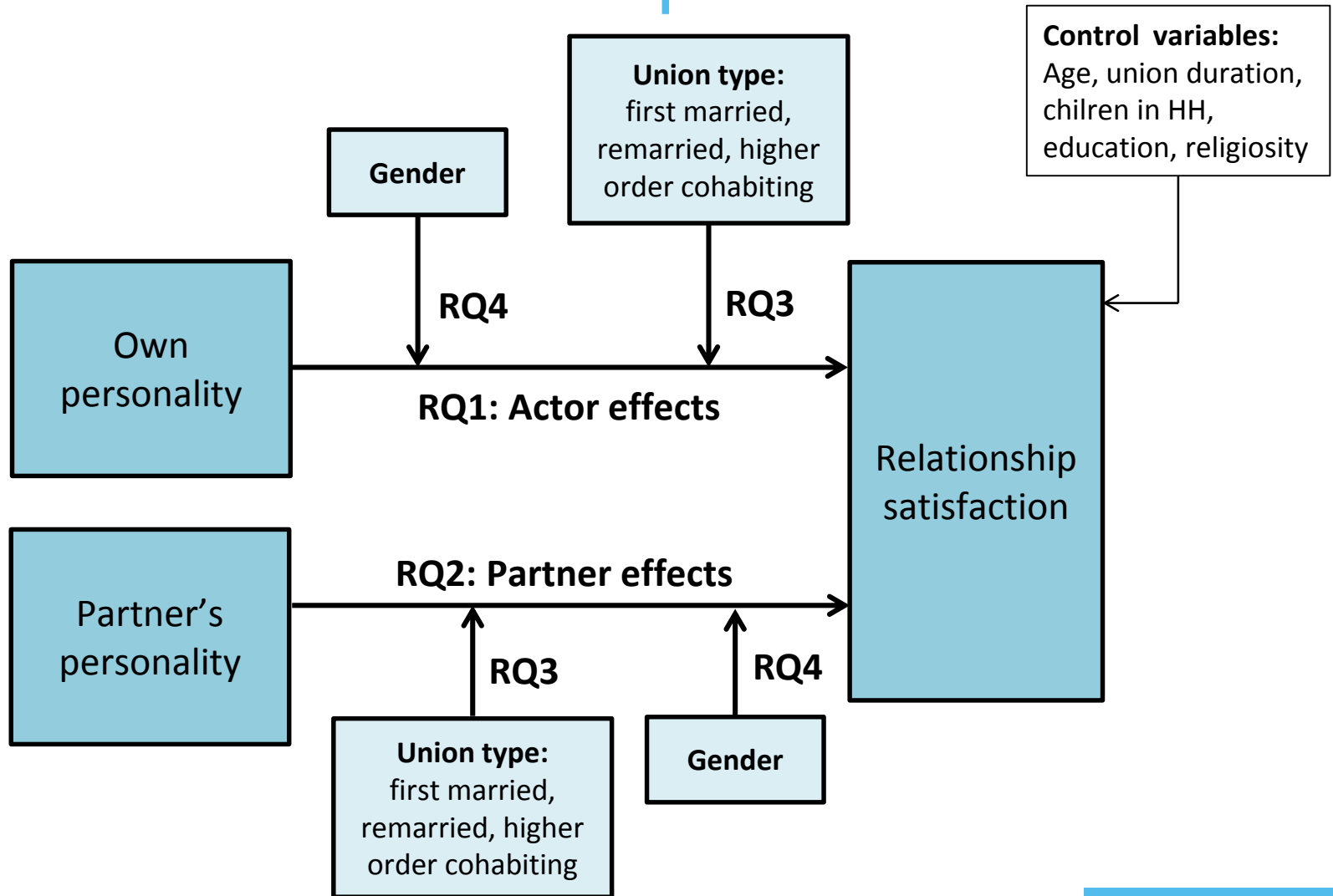
Gender differences in the effects of P

- P explains more variation in marital adjustment of women than men, mainly because of neuroticism → **stronger actor effects for women**
- Women's marital satisfaction is more influenced by partner's P than vice versa → **stronger partner effects for women**

Union type differences in the effects of P

- Previous work: newly-wed couples
- Becker's (1991) model of union dissolution: determinants of marital instability/adjustment are different at certain points in the marriage/relationship
- Some studies looked at differences according to union duration: e.g. Claxton et al. (2012): ↓ effect of N and ↑ effect of C over time
- No studies looked at differences in union order (married vs divorced) or union type (married vs cohabiting)

Research questions



Data

- Divorce in Flanders
- Sample of first marriages (1971-2008): 1/3 still intact, 2/3 dissolved (no 2nd divorces allowed)
- Both (ex-)spouses + new cohabiting partner
- Sample = 2283 unions (756 first married + 1527 higher order unions)

Variables

Variable	Information
Personality	Dutch Big Five Inventory (Denissen et al., 2008) Self-reports Range 1-5
Relationship satisfaction	Quality Marriage Index (QMI) (Norton, 1983) Range 6-45
Respondent's age	Range 18-76 years
Respondent's educational level	Range 1-3
Presence of children in HH	Dummy 0/1
Respondent's religiosity	Range 0-10
Union type	First married (33%) Remarried (37%) Higher-order cohabiting (30%)
Union duration	Range 0-475 months

Method

- Dyadic data → problem of non-independence
- Multi-level Actor-Partner Interdependence Models (APIM; Cook & Kenny, 2005)
- Pairwise dataset:

ID	person	QMI	E_actor	E_partner	N_actor	N_partner	...
1000	1	39,5	3,89	4,02	2,45	2,89	...
1000	2	40,5	4,02	3,89	2,89	2,45	...

Actor & partner effects of personality per union type

		FIRST MARRIED		REMARRIED			COHABITING		
		β	p	β	p	Union Δ	β	p	Union Δ
ACTOR EFFECTS	Intercept	41.82	***	39.40	***		39.14	***	
	Extraversion	0.35		0.64	**		0.75	**	
	Agreeableness	0.98	***	1.52	***		1.25	***	
	Neuroticism	-0.60	**	-0.71	**		-1.32	***	Sig.
	Conscientiousness	0.58	*	0.48	*		1.41	***	Sig.
	Openness	0.21		-0.41		Sig.	-0.49		Sig.
PARTNER EFFECTS	Extraversion	0.40		0.11			0.21		
	Agreeableness	0.72	**	0.10			0.60	°	
	Neuroticism	-0.12		-0.77	***	Sig.	-1.00	***	Sig.
	Conscientiousness	0.06		-0.07			0.66	*	
	Openness	0.25		0.09			-0.70	**	Sig.
CONTROLS	Gender (ref=female)	0.14		1.17	***	Sig.	0.84	***	Sig.
	Union duration	-0.01		-0.01	**		-0.01		
	Age	-0.03		0.03			-0.07	**	
	Educational level	-0.14		-0.56	**		-0.39		
	Children in HH	-1.61	***	0.29		Sig.	-0.55		Sig.
	Religiosity	0.14	**	0.06			0.07		
MODEL INFO	-2 LL	8855.1		10546.9			8546.8		
	ICC	0.54		0.42			0.37		
	N	1512		1668			1364		

Gender differences

ACTOR EFFECTS

- No gender differences for first married unions → relationship satisfaction is determined by personality more or less in the same way for husbands and wives
- Few gender differences in higher-order unions:
 - effect of N ↑ for women
 - female (-) actor effect of O , no male actor effect of O

PARTNER EFFECTS

- No gender differences

What makes partners happy?



- Own P matters more than P of partner
- The Big Three: agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness
- Stronger effects of P on relationship satisfaction in higher-order unions and especially in higher-order cohabiting unions
 - in less committed relationships, satisfaction with the relationship is more influenced by personal attributes?
- Mixed results for openness
- Effect of partner's neuroticism on relationship satisfaction in higher-order unions and not in first married unions
 - after a divorce, the attributes of the partner matter more?
 - composition effect? Survival effect?
- Few evidence for gender differences
- First married partners are more alike than ever-divorced partners

Limitations

- Dyads: selective non-response?
- Cross-sectional, but cross-temporal & cross-situational stability of P
- Shared method variance