

# Personality

What makes us who we are?

## **Psych 305A: Lecture 22**

**Wrap up Relationships  
Begin Gender and Personality**

# Exam 5

- Mean = 66%
- Range = 27-93%

## But, the good news...

- Everyone will get a free 1% toward their final grade
- After total grades calculated, across 6 exams, EVERYONE will get 1 free %
- Plus, extra credit for HSP participation

# Exam 5 Problem Items

2. Why might the Big 5 personality traits have evolved?

- a. People high in extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness are more likely to have survived and reproduced
- b. Knowing and thinking about whether others are high or low on those traits tells you who to form social bonds with
- c. Men who are high in extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness are more likely to be successful in finding a mate
- d. There is no evidence that the Big 5 evolved
- e. A and B

# Problem Items

11. According to lecture, which of the following is true of personality and romantic relationships?

- a. Opposites attract.
- b. Women care more about assortative mating than men.
- c. Couples with more similar personality traits have greater relationship satisfaction.
- d. People want complementarity, but they get similarity.
- e. People who are high in openness to experience are most open to finding a partner who is different from them.

# Problem Items

20. All of the following are examples of social learning, EXCEPT:

- a. A child hitting “Bobo” in Bandura’s bobo doll study.
- b. A toddler helping an adult open a cabinet after watching his parents help each other.
- c. A student beating up someone younger after playing a violent video game.
- d. A convicted burglar deciding not to steal again because of the shame he suffered from his punishment.
- e. All of the above are examples of social learning.

# Is similarity related to relationship satisfaction?

- Couples with similar personality traits are *not* more satisfied in their relationship
- But, if partner is similar to your “ideal personality” then relationship satisfaction is higher
- Which traits do people want in a partner?

# What do people want in a partner? (International Sample)

- Males
  - Mutual attraction/love (2.81)
  - Dependable (2.50)
  - Emotional stability (2.47)
  - Pleasing disposition (2.44)
  - Good health (2.31)
  - Education/Intelligence (2.27)
  - Sociability (2.15)
- Less important
  - Chastity (1.06)
  - Similar religious background (.98)
  - Similar political background (.92)
- Females
  - Mutual attraction/love (2.87)
  - Dependable (2.69)
  - Emotional stability (2.68)
  - Pleasing disposition (2.52)
  - Education/Intelligence (2.45)
  - Sociability (2.30)
  - Good health (2.28)
- Less important
  - Similar religious background (1.21)
  - Similar political background (1.03)
  - Chastity (.75)



# **What should people want in a partner?**

Which traits are related to relationship satisfaction?

# Traits that Predict Partner's Satisfaction

- Overall:
  - Husband: A, ES, O/I (in wife)
  - Wife: A, C, ES, O/I (in husband)
- Confide:
  - Husband: A (in wife)
  - Wife: A, ES, O/I (in husband)
- Sexual:
  - Husband: A, C, ES (in wife)
  - Wife: A (in husband)
- Enjoyment:
  - Husband: A, ES (in wife)
  - Wife: A, ES (in husband)

# Which traits predict future relationship quality and conflict?

- Longitudinal study assessed three traits:
  - Positive Emotionality (PEM): Confidence, enthusiasm, social warmth, well-being, and zest
  - Negative Emotionality (NEM): Threshold for negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, fear
  - Constraint (CON): Self-control, harm avoidance, and endorsement of social norms

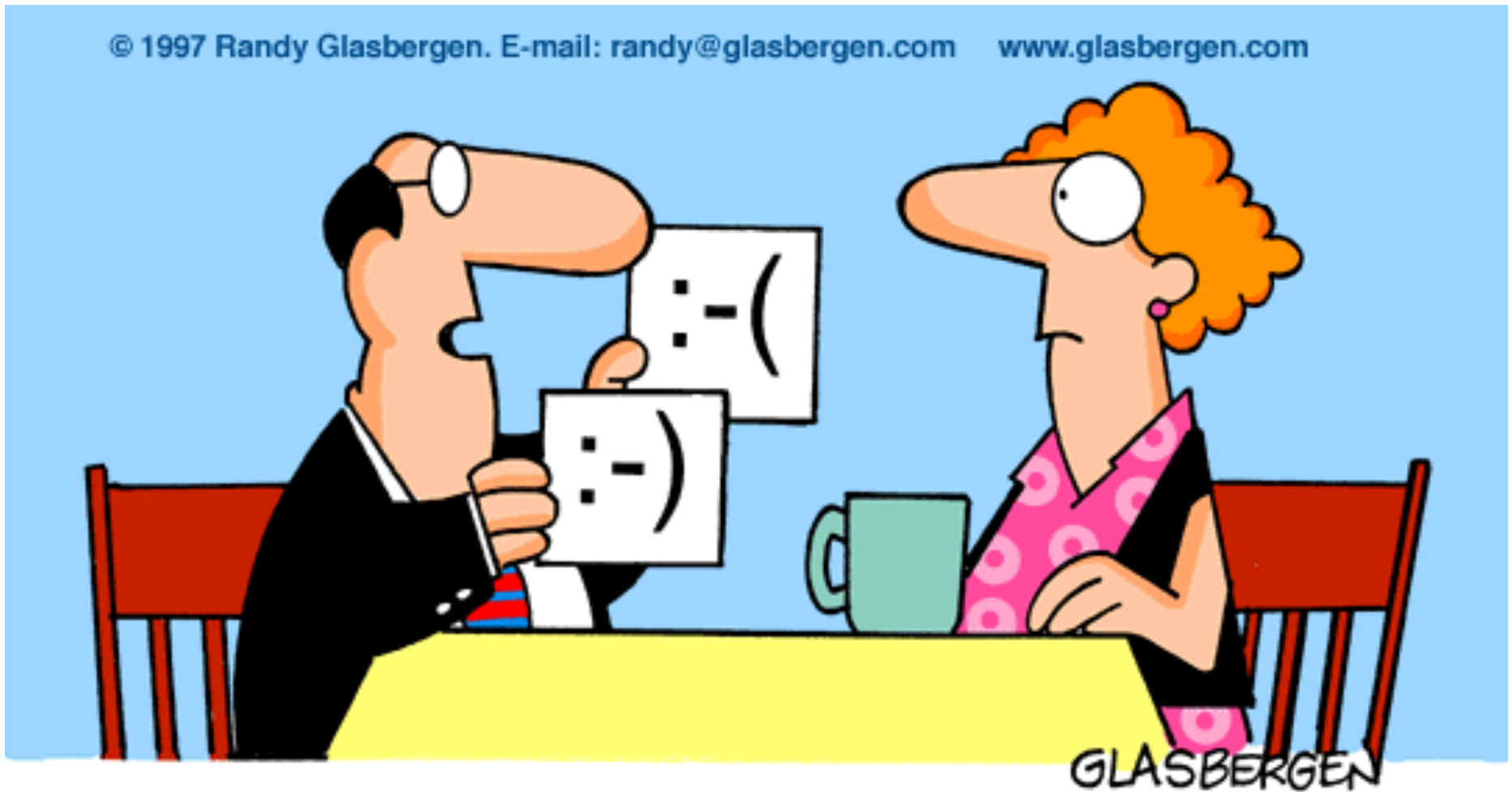
# Correlations with Relationships

- How does age 18 personality (PEM, NEM, constraint) relate to age 26 relationship variables

	<u>Quality</u>	<u>Conflict</u>
• Positive Emotionality:	.14	.00
• Negative Emotionality:	-.21	.22
• Constraint:	.17	-.11

# Expression of Emotion

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**“You always complain that I don’t know how to show my emotions, so I made these signs.”**

# Expression of Emotions in Relationships

- Gottman & Levenson
- Newlywed couples engaged in conflict discussion while videotaped
  - Videotapes coded for emotional responses, style of interaction [Observational data]
  - Physiological measures [Test-data]
  - Couple members rate partner's relationship satisfaction [Informant data] and own satisfaction [Self-data]
- Couples followed up to 5 years later
- Divorce was predicted from data, with 83% accuracy

# The “Love Lab”



# Four Main Factors that Predict Divorce

- 1. Criticism vs. Complaint:
  - *Criticism*: Global statement of anger, displeasure, distress, or other negativity, tends to be blaming (e.g., “You never take me anywhere.”)
  - *Complaint*: specific statement of anger, displeasure, distress, or other negativity (e.g., “We don’t go out as much as I would like to”)
- Criticisms (but not complaints) predict divorce
- Escalation of negative affect is very bad
  - De-escalation of negative affect (e.g., through humor) is very good



# Four Main Factors that Predict Divorce

- 2. Contempt: Insult, mockery, sarcasm, or derision of the other person.
  - Includes disapproval, judgment, disdain, exasperation, mockery, put-downs, or communicating that the other person is absurd or incompetent

# Four Main Factors that Predict Divorce

- 3. Defensiveness: Attempt to protect one's self from perceived attack
  - May include denial of responsibility, counterblame, or whine
  - May be a response to “Mindreading”
    - Attribution of motives, feelings, or behaviors made by one partner to the other partner
    - Example: “You always get tense in situations like this.”  
“No I don't. You are the one who always gets tense!”

# Four Main Factors that Predict Divorce

- 4. Stonewalling: The listener presents a “stone wall” to his/her partner.
  - No small “assenting” vocalizations like “mmmm” or “yeah”
  - No head nods; neck is rigid
  - There is little gaze at the speaker
  - Little facial movement, but when there is it is negative
  - 85% of stonewallers are male

# Overall Findings

- Four “horsemen of the apocalypse” (criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling) predict divorce
- What distinguishes satisfied and dissatisfied couples is *not* how frequently they conflict, but the way in which negative feelings are expressed during conflicts.
  - Disagreements not more common among dissatisfied couples, but dissatisfied couples more likely to express disagreement with negative affect
- A 5:1 ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions is characteristic of a good marriage
  - ONE negative interaction can wipe out the effects of several positive interactions

# Overall Findings

- Negative emotions are associated with high levels of physiological arousal for men, but not for women
  - Men may avoid negative affect in relationships because it is more physiologically punishing
  - Emotionally, men experience lower levels of negative affect than women

# Personality and Gender

**But wait, is it even ok to talk  
about gender differences in  
personality?**

# Talk of Gender Differences: controversial!



- In February, 2005, Harvard University President Lawrence Summers commented in a speech that the differences in men's and women's achievement in math and science (which have been found repeatedly) might be due to genetic factors.



# Talk of Gender Differences

- MIT Biologist Nancy Hopkins left the room
  - “When he started talking about innate differences in aptitude between men and women, I just couldn’t breathe, because this kind of bias makes me physically ill.”
  - Summers later apologized, but eventually was asked to leave Harvard

# Talk of Gender Differences

- Was Summers doing anything wrong?
  - Steven Pinker: NO! It's possible that hormones act on the fetus differently, affect cognitive and spatial abilities
    - We won't ever know if this is true unless scientists are allowed to study it and talk about it
  - Liz Spelke: YES! Children are treated differently from such an early age, we can't ever separate the role of environment
    - If we keep talking about it, girls will keep getting the message that they're not as good

# Next Class

- Gender
- Homework:
  - Read Larsen & Buss, Chapter 15