

Personality
What makes us who we are?

Psych 305A: Lecture 23

Wrap up Relationships
Begin Gender and Personality

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Is similarity related to relationship satisfaction?

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

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chastity (1.06) – Similar religious background (.98) – Similar political background (.92) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Similar religious background (1.21) – Similar political background (1.03) – Chastity (.75) |
|--|---|

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What should people want in a partner?

Which traits are actually related to relationship satisfaction?

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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)

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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

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Correlations with Relationships

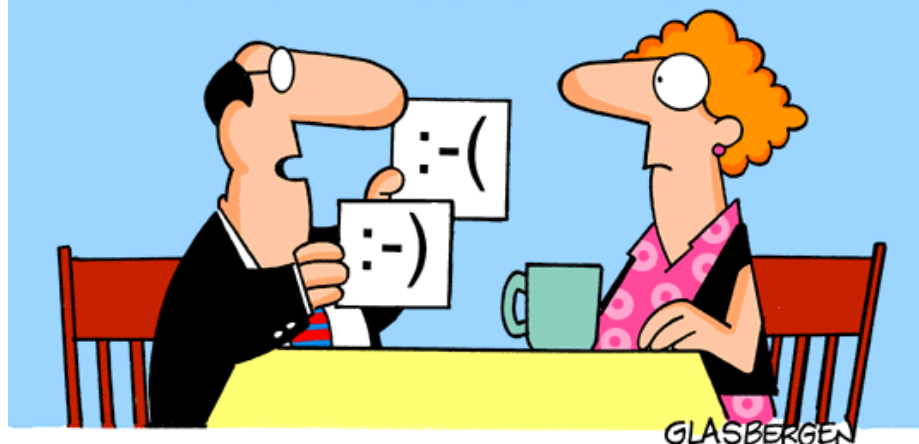
- How does age 18 personality (PEM, NEM, constraint) relate to age 26 relationship variables

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

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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

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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

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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

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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!”

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Four Main Factors that Predict Divorce

- 4. Stonewalling: The listener presents a “stone wall” to his/her partner.
 - No small “assenting” vocalizations like “mmm” 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

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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

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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

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Personality and Gender

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

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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.

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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

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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

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Why is gender differences such a dangerous topic?

- Acceptance of gender differences in ability could promote discrimination
- If young children believe in differences, could inhibit success/hard work
 - Self-fulfilling prophesy
- But, what about the progress of science?
 - Do we need to talk about the possibility of gender differences in order to learn the *scientific truth*?

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Gender Difference in Math and Science

- Varies by culture
 - Most prominent in USA, where culture dictates that math is not “cool” for girls
- In the 1980s, American middle-school boys outperformed girls, at the highest ability level, by 13 to 1. Now, it’s 3 to 1.
- Gender difference only emerges after elementary school
 - When math gets harder, boys are encouraged to push through

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Why is gender differences such a dangerous topic?

- But, what about the progress of science?
 - Do we need to talk about the possibility of gender differences in order to learn the *scientific truth*?
 - Or, does this kind of conversation inherently *promote* problematic gender differences?

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UBC research addressed this issue

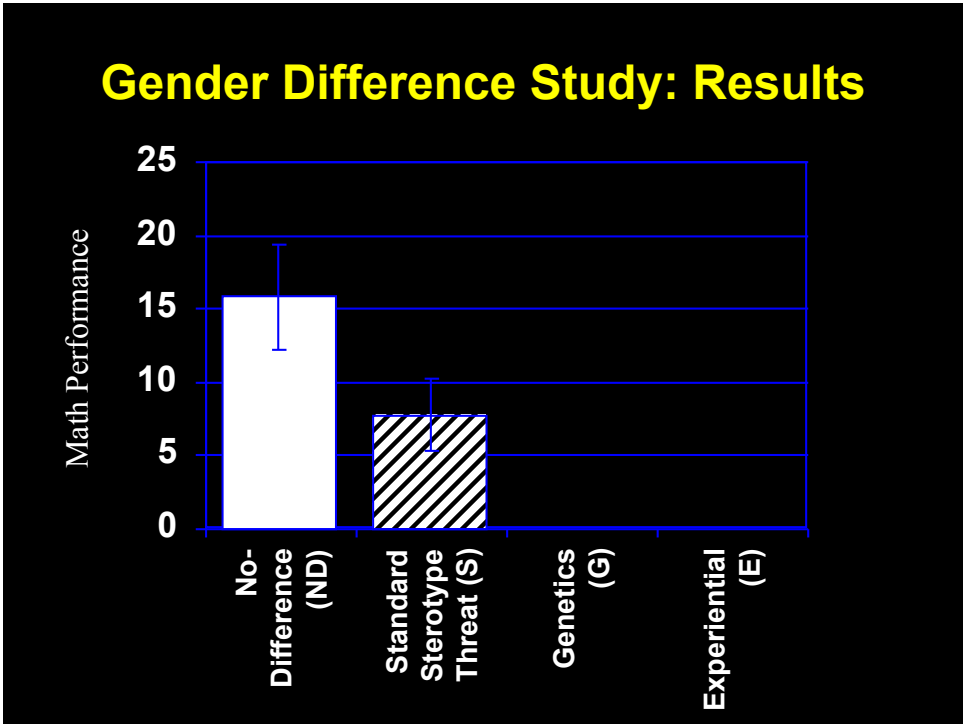
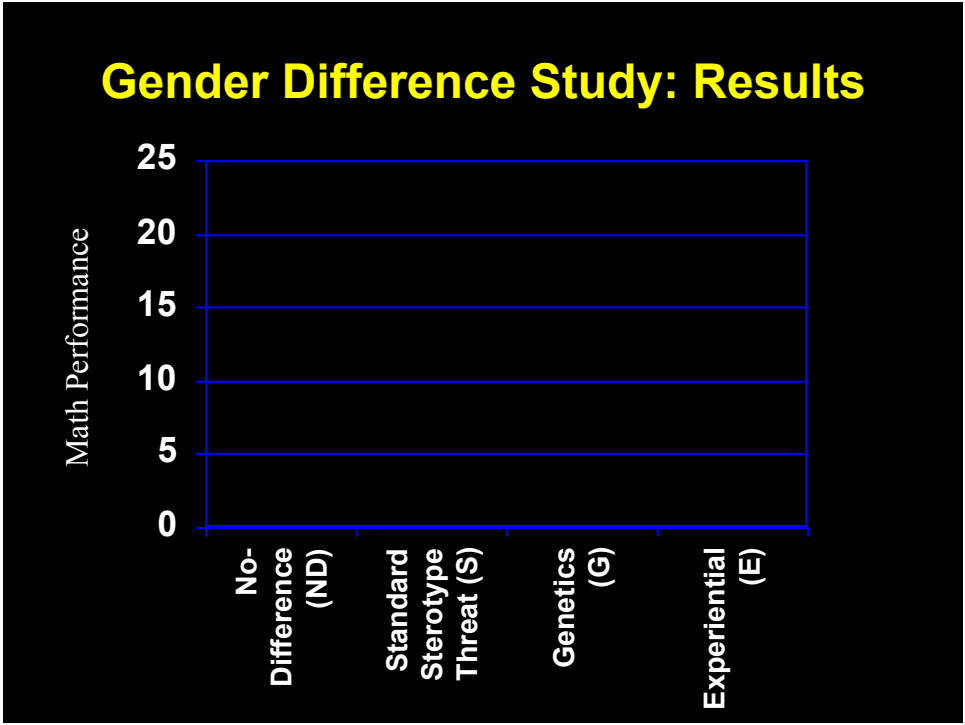
- Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2006 (*Science*)
- Question: Does telling women that they are genetically worse at math lower their math performance?
 - If so, can we counteract this effect by telling them:
 - A) no real gender difference
 - B) there is a difference, but it's due to environmental causes

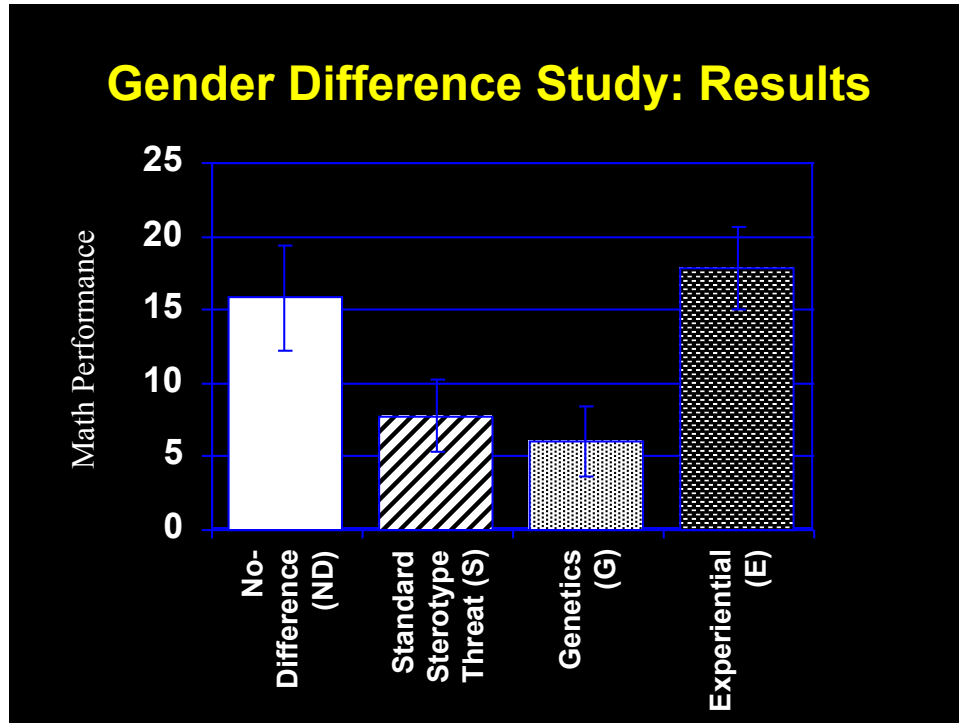
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Gender Difference Study

1. Female pp read an essay
 - Condition 1: Essays argue for a gender difference in math, due to genetic factors (Summers condition)
 - Condition 2: Essays argue for gender difference in math, due to environmental factors (Spelke condition)
 - Condition 3: No essay, but prime gender (standard stereotype threat)
 - Condition 4: Essays argue for no gender difference
- 2. Pp do math test, performance assessed

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Gender Difference Study

- Telling women that gender difference is due to genes hurts their performance
 - Lack of control
- Why does telling them that it's due to life experiences solve the problem?
- What does this mean for research on gender differences?

Next Class

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

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