

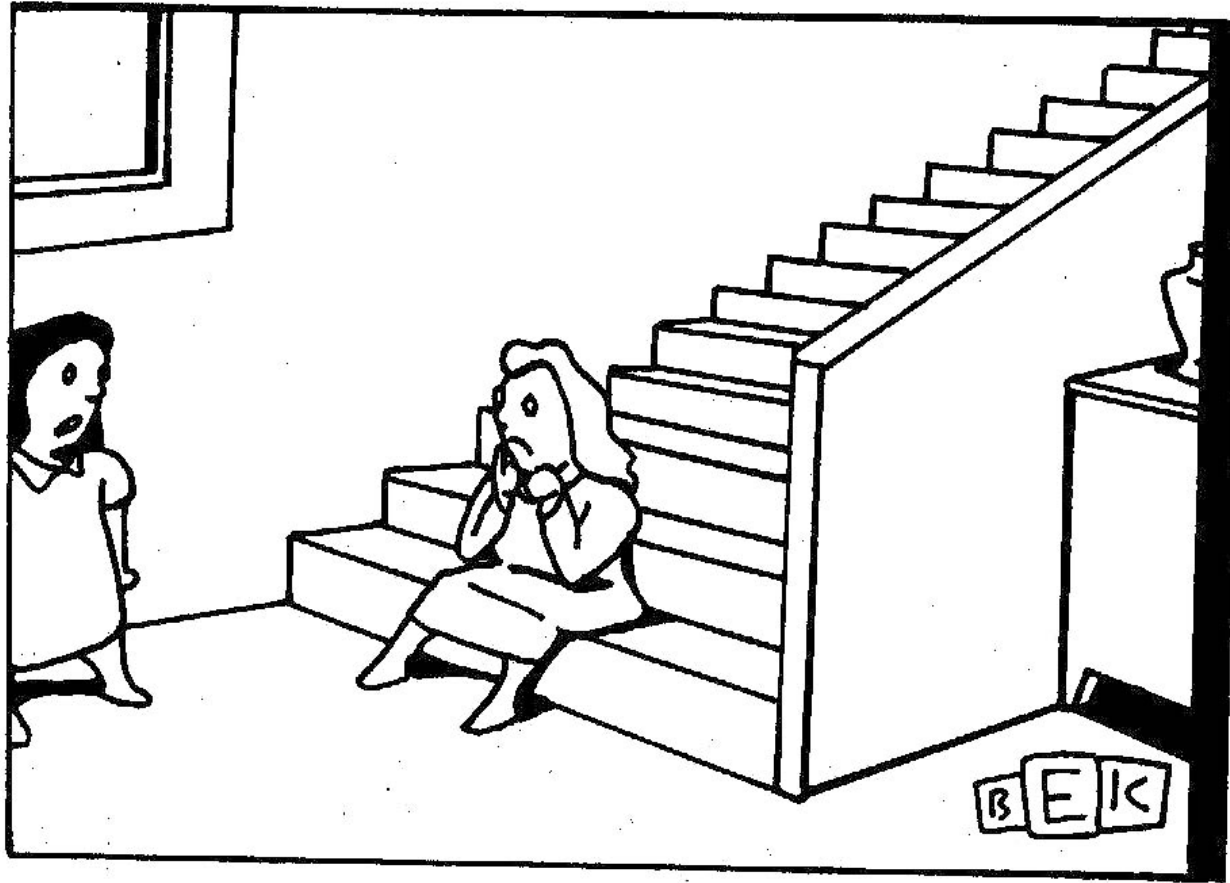
The Centrality of Responsiveness in Relational Life

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The University of Rochester



CreatingConnections

20 April, 2017



“The problems will remain the same, but apparently they get wordier and wordier.”

rapport trust
communal sharing social support
partner affirmation forgiveness
positive illusions felt security
empathy self-verification
attachment security autonomy support
responsive listening intimacy
invisible support sense of belonging
friendship-based emotional acceptance
marriage shared meaning systems
soothing compassionate love

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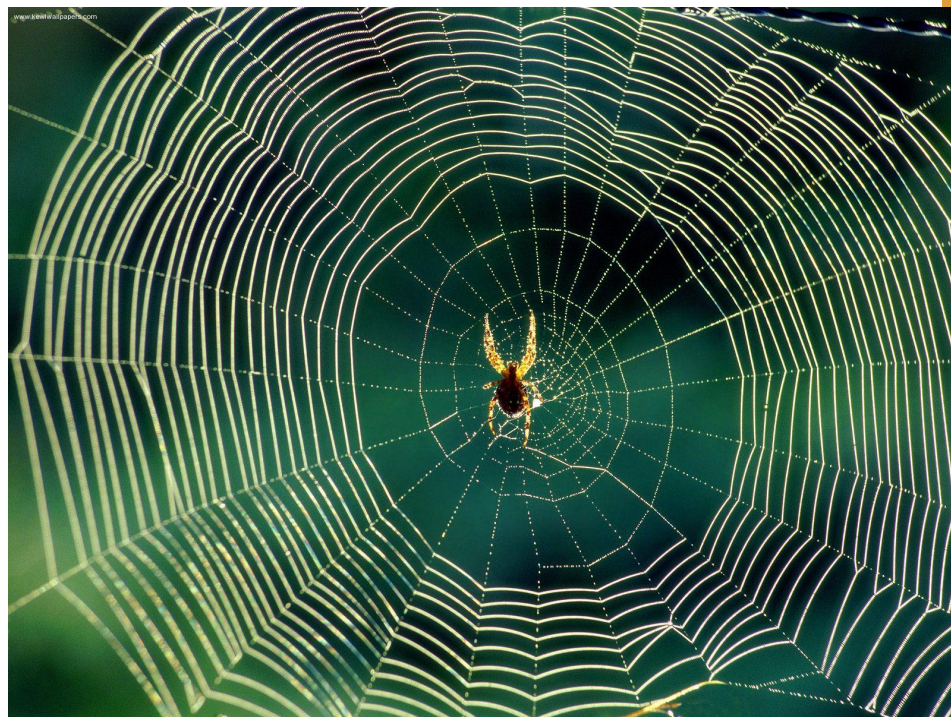
1. 海鮮豆腐羹
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5. 芋頭扣上肉
6. 清蒸海上鮮

C. 恭喜發財 \$69.00

- | | |
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| 3. 百花蒸釀豆腐 | 7. 滿地落金錢 |
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| 20. 大鹵麵 \$5.75 | 40. 清蒸海上鮮 \$時價 |



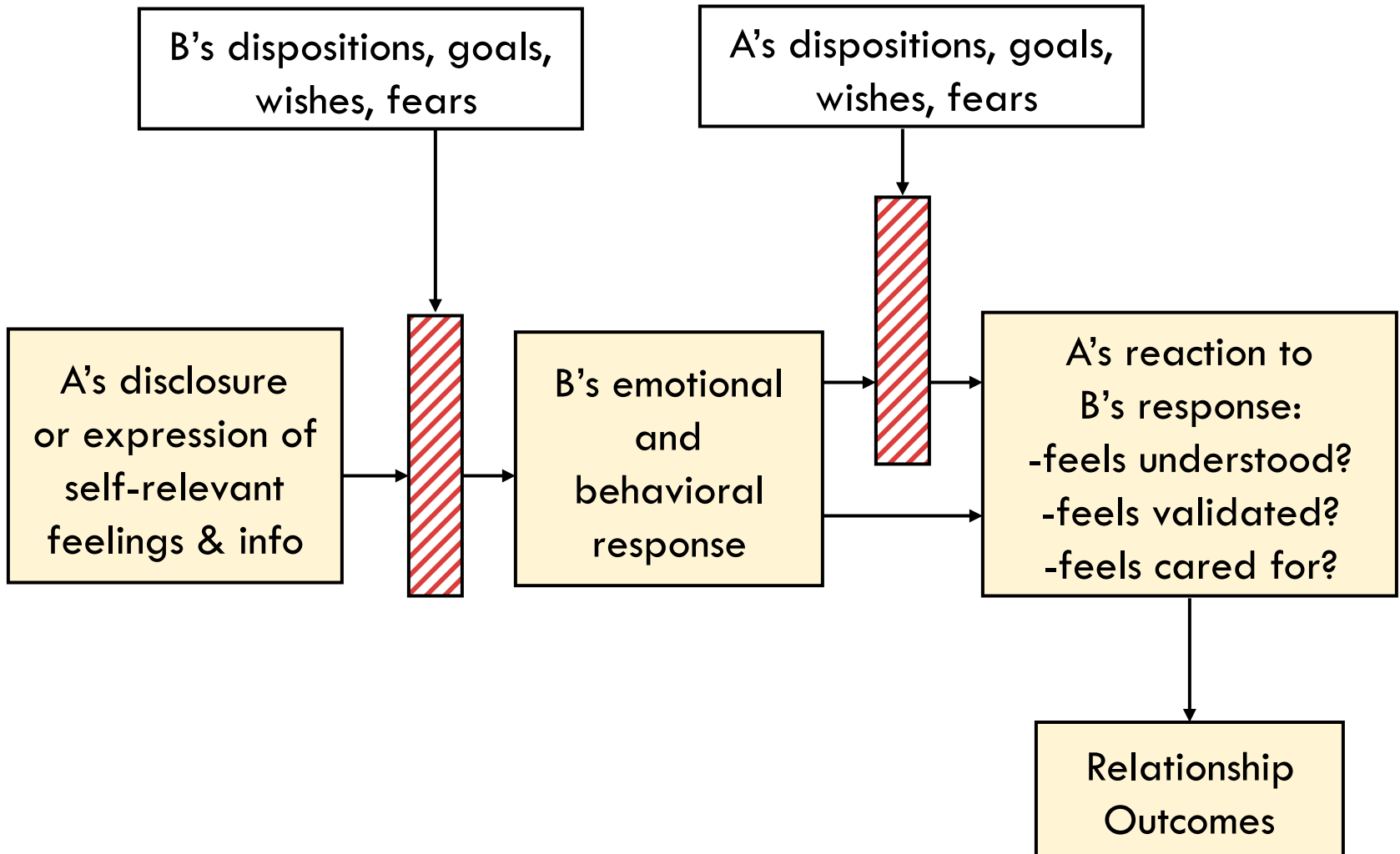


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Interaction Process Model of “Perceived Partner Responsiveness to the Self”



Adapted from Reis & Shaver, 1988

When people “perceive partner responsiveness to the self” they feel:

- that relationship partners attend to and react supportively to central, important, core defining features of the self;
- a sense of being valued, understood, and cared for;
- a sense of warmth and connection, and authenticity;
- have faith that their partner will “be there” when needs arise;
- open both to their partners and more generally.
- During interaction, partners are experienced as being responsive to one’s needs, goals, and values.

Outline of Studies

- Responsiveness promotes a “pro-partner orientation”
- Good news!
- Responsiveness and everyday compassionate acts
- Responsiveness and sexual desire
- Perceived partner responsiveness lessens defensiveness



Did you leave the interaction feeling worse or better in terms of your ...

feelings about your ability to effectively complete tasks?
worse -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 better

feelings about the way you look?
worse -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 better

feelings of confidence in your social abilities?
worse -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 better

feelings about your "stage presence in public situations"?
worse -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 better

day ____ length ____ hrs ____ mins; females ____ males;
How long since the actual interaction? ____ hrs ____ mins.
Describe the context? _____

How satisfied were you with the interaction?
less than expected 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 more than expected

What was the tone of the interaction?
very unpleasant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very pleasant

Did you initiate the interaction? yes no

Was there problem-solving? yes no

Was/were the other(s) your peer(s)? yes no

Did the interaction take place at your room/house? yes no

Was the interaction in public? yes no

Was there any conflict involved? yes no

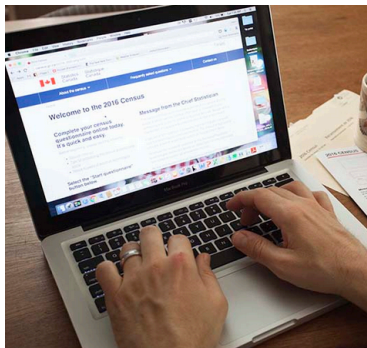
Will you see the other(s) again today? yes no

On average, was/were the other(s) of higher or lower status than you? (blank for equal) higher lower

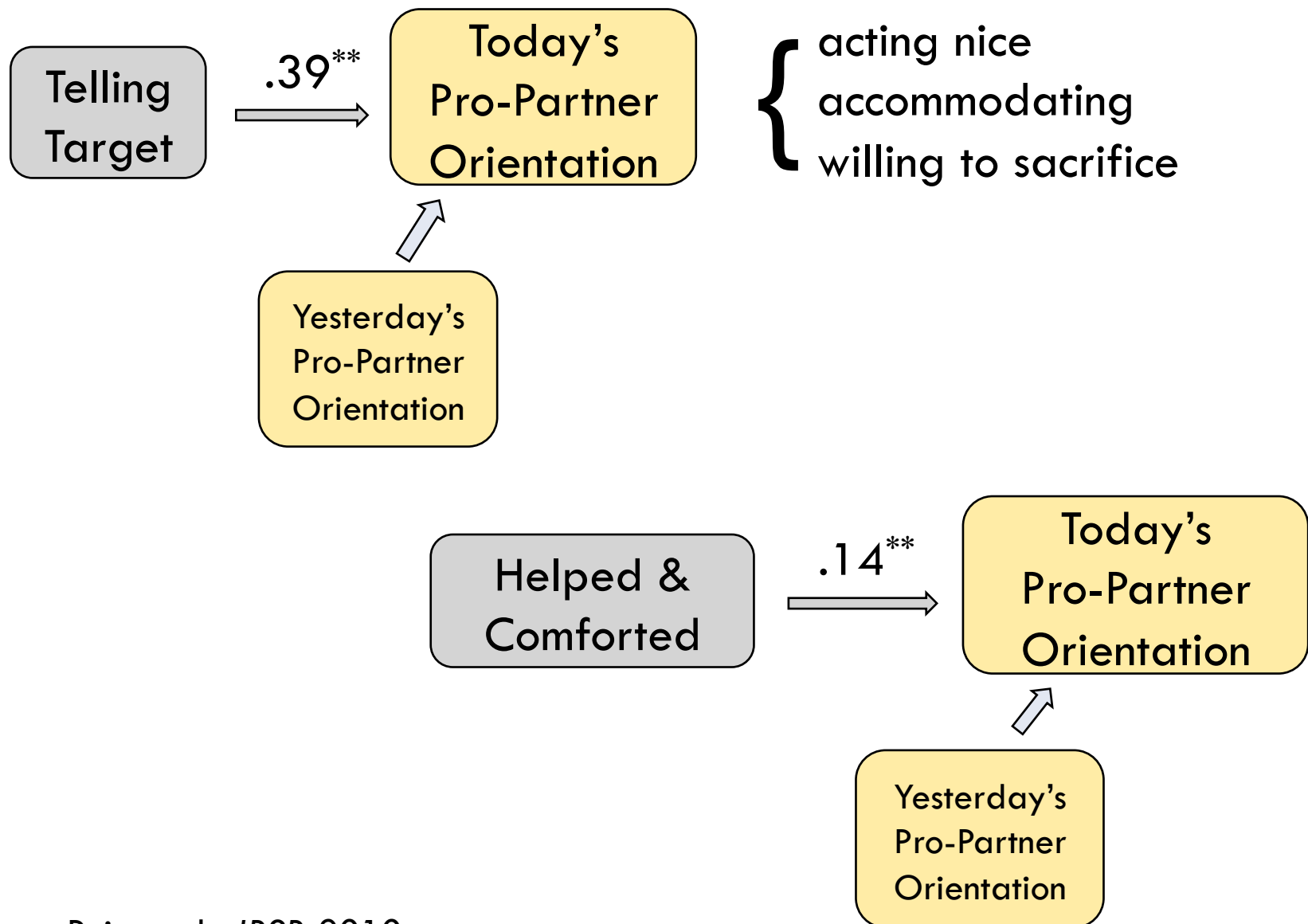
Was the interaction with A, B, or C? A B C

Daily Diary Studies

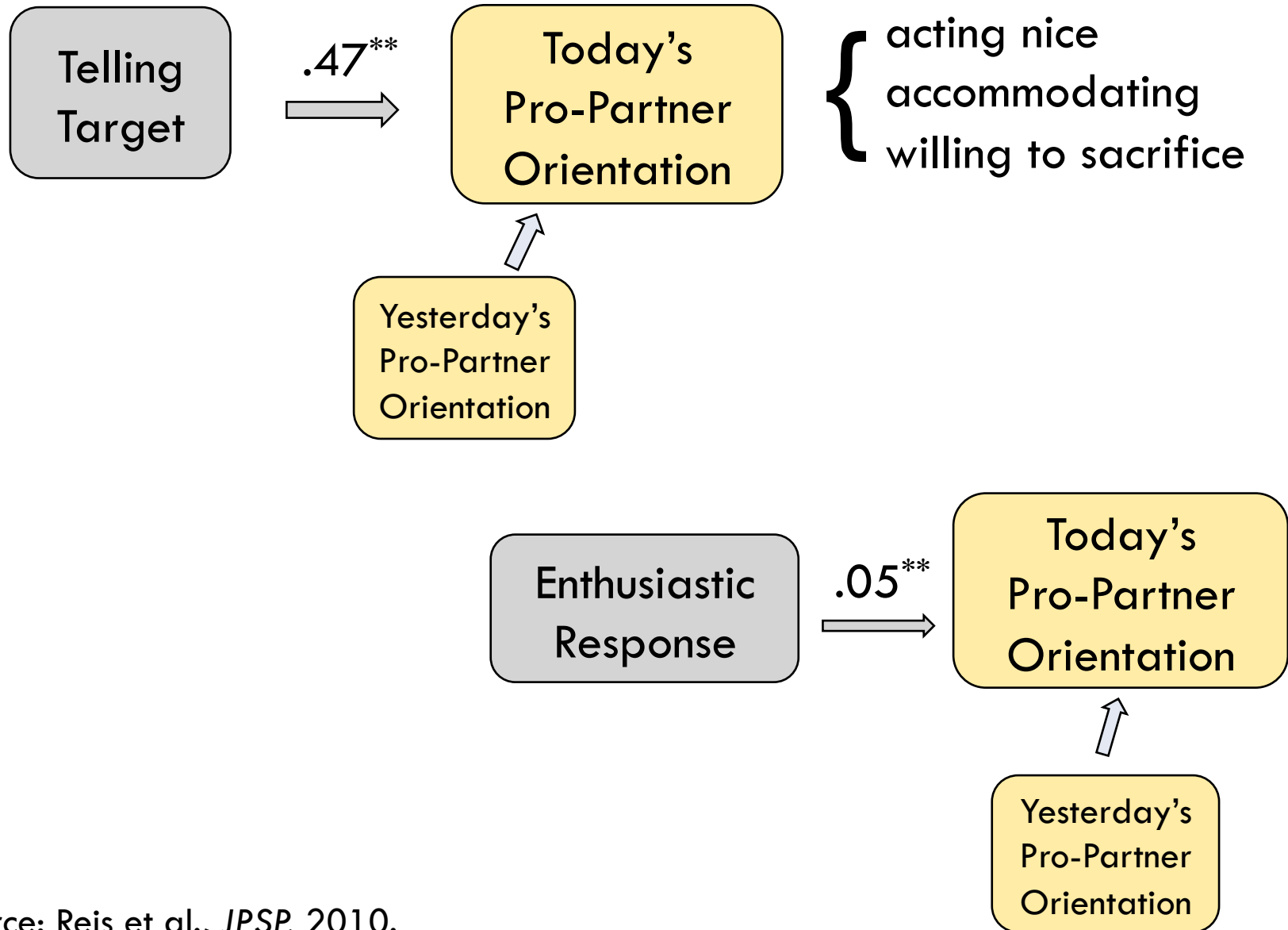
- Test theories in the natural, spontaneous context of relational behavior.
- Minimize retrospection, selection bias.
- Examine fluctuations within-person (and within-couples) across time and context, over and above individual differences.



Did you tell your partner about the **WORST** thing that happened today?



Did you tell your partner about the **BEST** thing that happened today?



Source: Reis et al., *JPSP*, 2010.

CAPITALIZATION

Good



When
~~Bad~~ Things
Happen to
Good People

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HAROLD S.
KUSHNER

Traditional Focus of Responsiveness Research:

- Whether couples manage conflicts constructively or destructively.
- Forgiveness and acceptance after transgressions.
- Help and caregiving when stressful events occur.

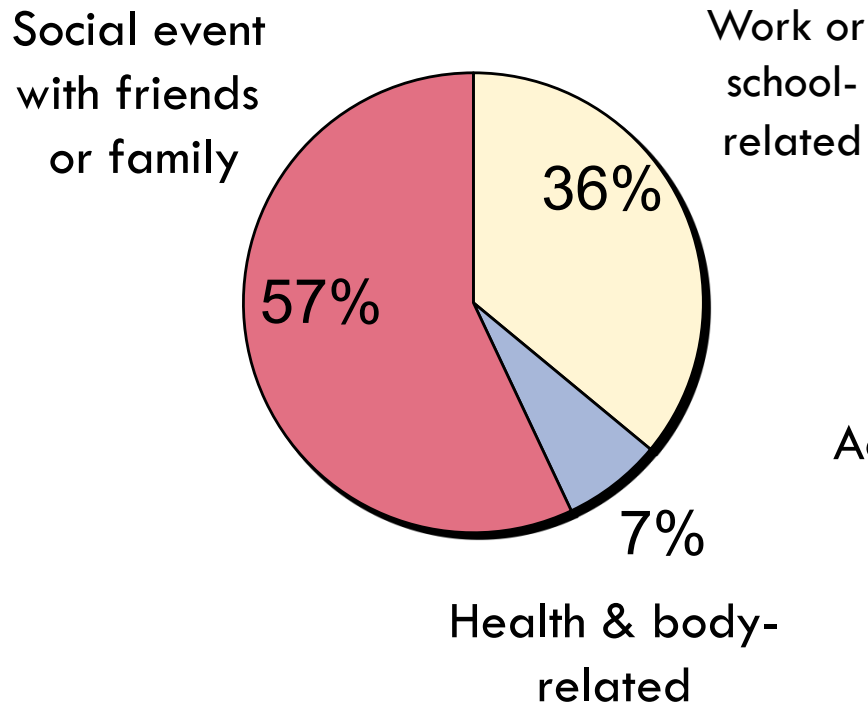


But Positive Contexts Matter, Too:

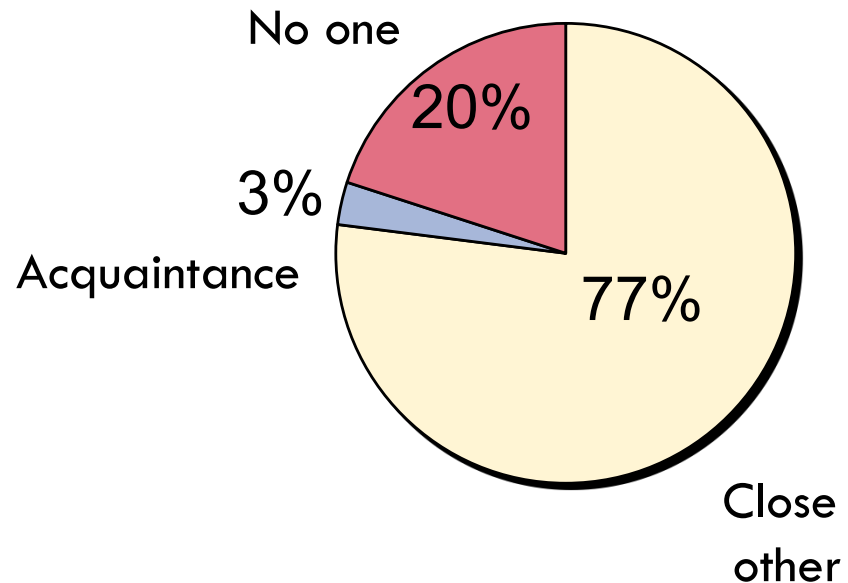
- Sharing the good times.
- Support of aspirations, growth, and goal pursuit.



“What was the best thing that happened today?”

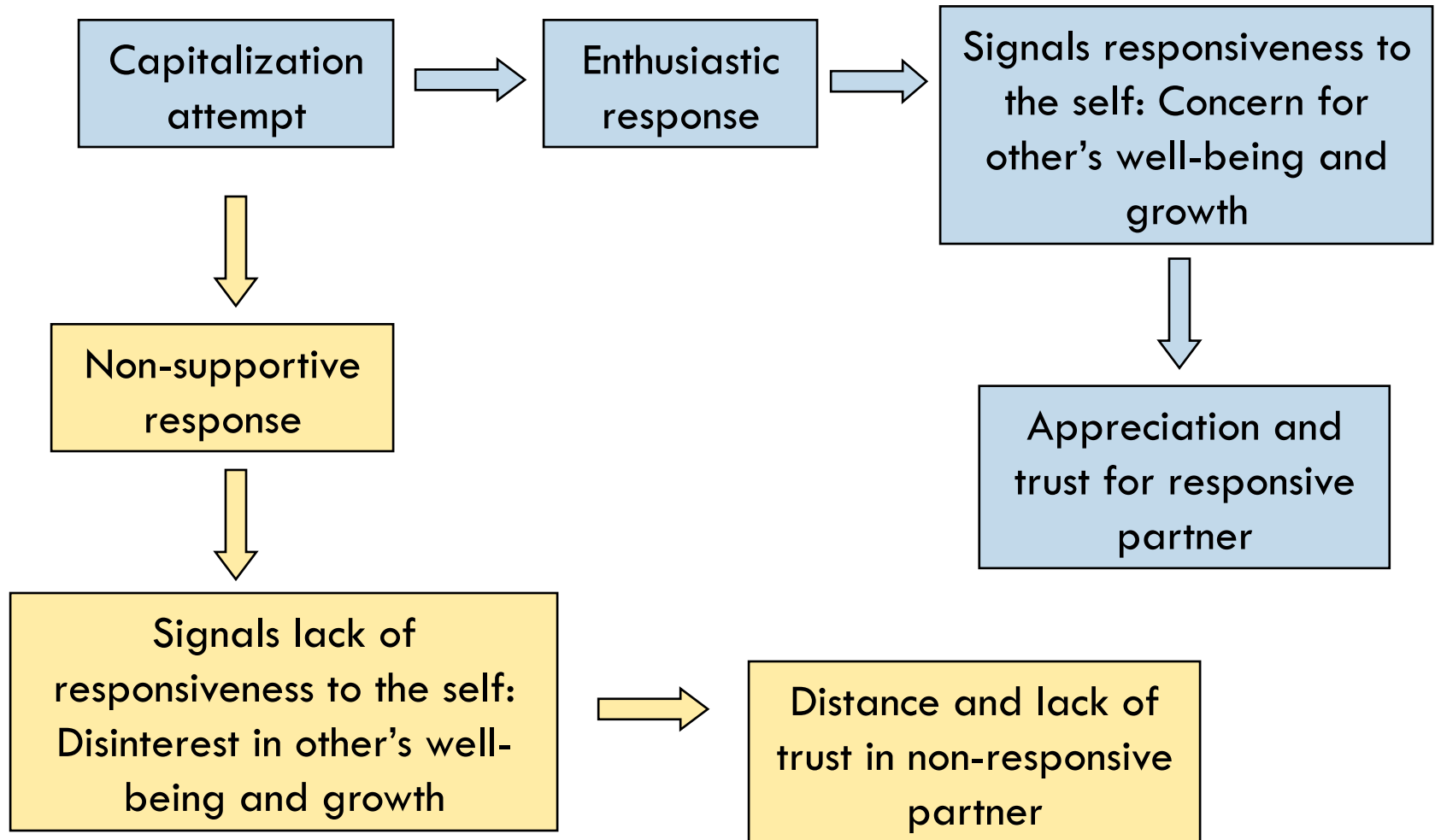


“Who did you tell?”



Capitalization Builds Social Resources

An interpersonal process: A listener's enthusiastic response signals appreciation and sharing, and thereby builds a social resource.



Responsiveness is More than Liking: Promoting Trust in Capitalization Contexts



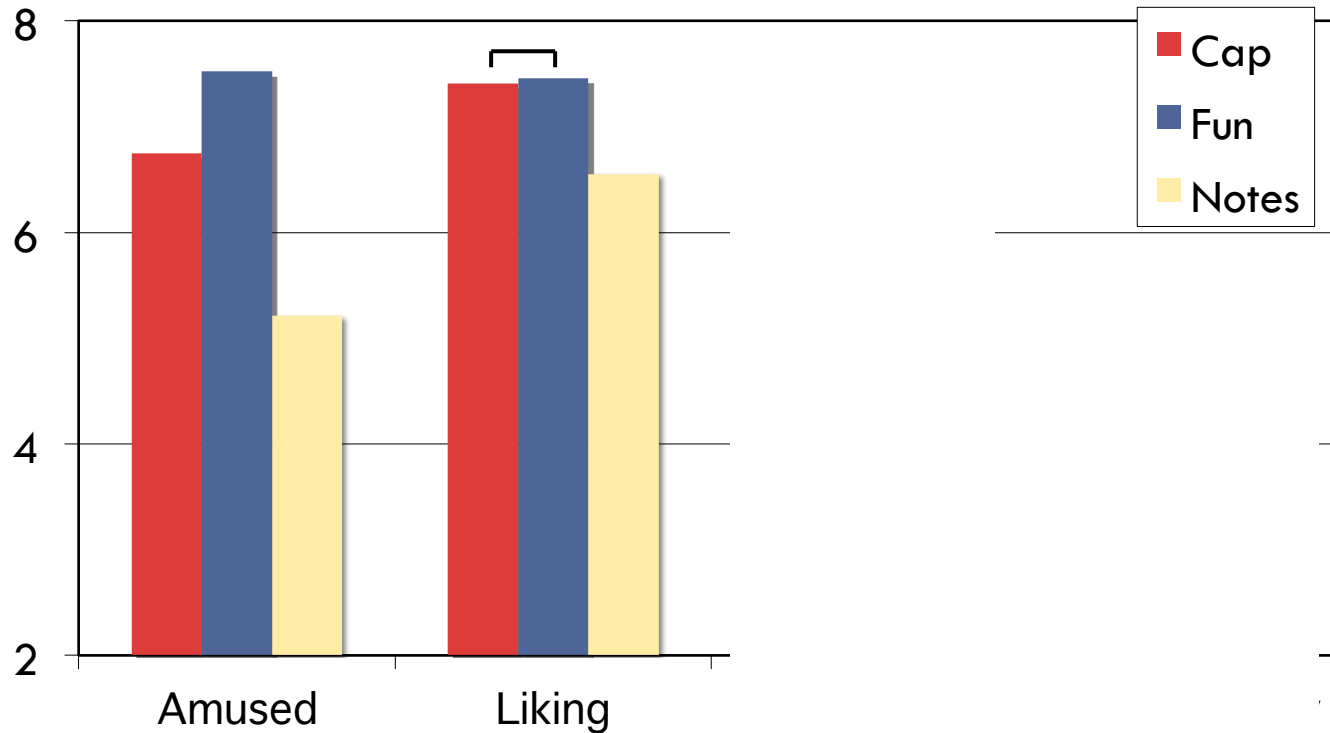
Capitalization Condition:
“Wow, that’s great” etc.

Fun Condition:
Describe Dr. Seuss pictures for
confederate to draw



Notes Condition:
Interview about positive event and take notes

Responsiveness is More than Liking: Promoting Trust in Capitalization Contexts



Means without brackets differ significantly.
Source: Reis et al., *JPSP*, 2010.

“When I tell my partner about something good that happened to me ...

ACTIVE-CONSTRUCTIVE

... my partner usually reacts to my good fortune enthusiastically.”

ACTIVE-DESTRUCTIVE

... he/she points out the potential problems or down sides of the good event.”

PASSIVE-CONSTRUCTIVE

... my partner says little but I know he/she is happy for me.”

PASSIVE-DESTRUCTIVE

... sometimes I get the impression that he/she doesn't care much.”

TAKE AWAY

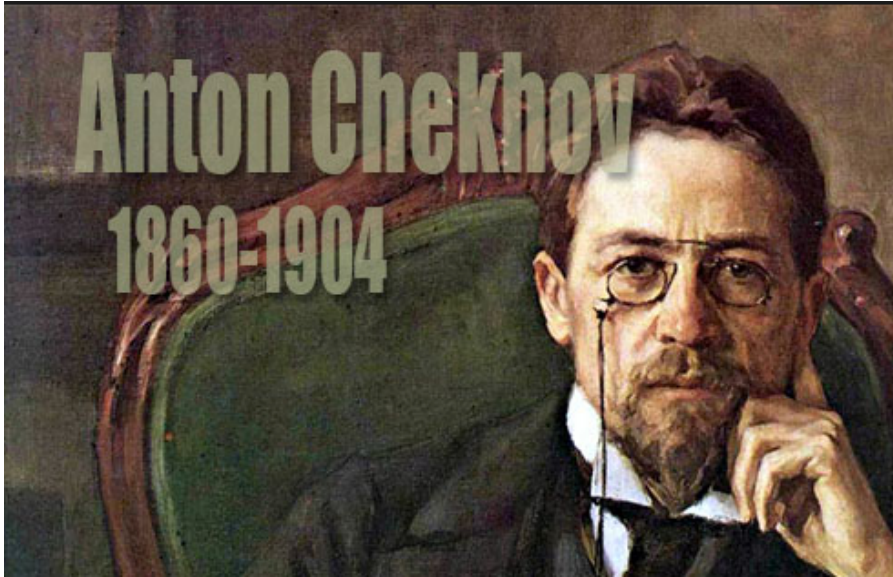


- Responsiveness in positive contexts may be just as important for nurturing close relationships as responsiveness during times of distress.
- By encouraging responsiveness, partners build social resources that can enhance trust and pro-partner orientations.

Outline of Studies

- Responsiveness promotes a “pro-partner orientation”
- Good news!
- **Responsiveness and everyday compassionate acts**
- Responsiveness and sexual desire
- Perceived partner responsiveness lessens defensiveness

“Any idiot can face a crisis;
it is this day-to-day living
that wears you out.”



How do partners express responsive support in everyday life? Compassionate Acts

- Focused on the well-being of the other.
- Freely given.
- Some degree of accurate understanding of the situation, the other, and oneself.
- Fundamentally valuing and respecting the other.
- Openness and receptivity.
- Tenderness and caring.

Diary of Everyday Acts of Responsiveness (DEAR)

Today, I willingly put my partner's goals or wishes ahead of my own.

Today, I said or did something to show that I value my partner.

Today, I really tried to understand my partner's thoughts and feelings.

Today, I expressed a lot of tenderness and caring for my partner.

Today, I went out of my way to "be there" for my partner.

Today, I really tried to be accepting rather than judging of something about my partner.

Today, I willingly modified my plans or activities for my partner's sake.

Today, I voluntarily did something special for my partner.

Today, I was genuinely open and receptive to things my partner said or asked of me.

Today, I did something to show my partner that I respect and admire him/her as a person.

A dyadic perspective:

Does coordination of one partner's responsive acts and the other's perceptions of responsiveness matter?



The Actor's Perspective (Enacted):
"I understand how you feel"

The Partner's Perspective (Perceived):
"You're so understanding"

OR

"I wish you understood how I feel!"

Diary of Everyday Acts of Responsiveness (DEAR)

Today, my partner willingly put my goals or wishes ahead of her/his own.

Today, my partner said or did something to show that she/he values me.

Today, my partner really tried to understand my thoughts and feelings.

Today, my partner expressed a lot of tenderness and caring for me.

Today, my partner went out of her/his way to "be there" for me.

Today, my partner really tried to be accepting rather than judging of something about me.

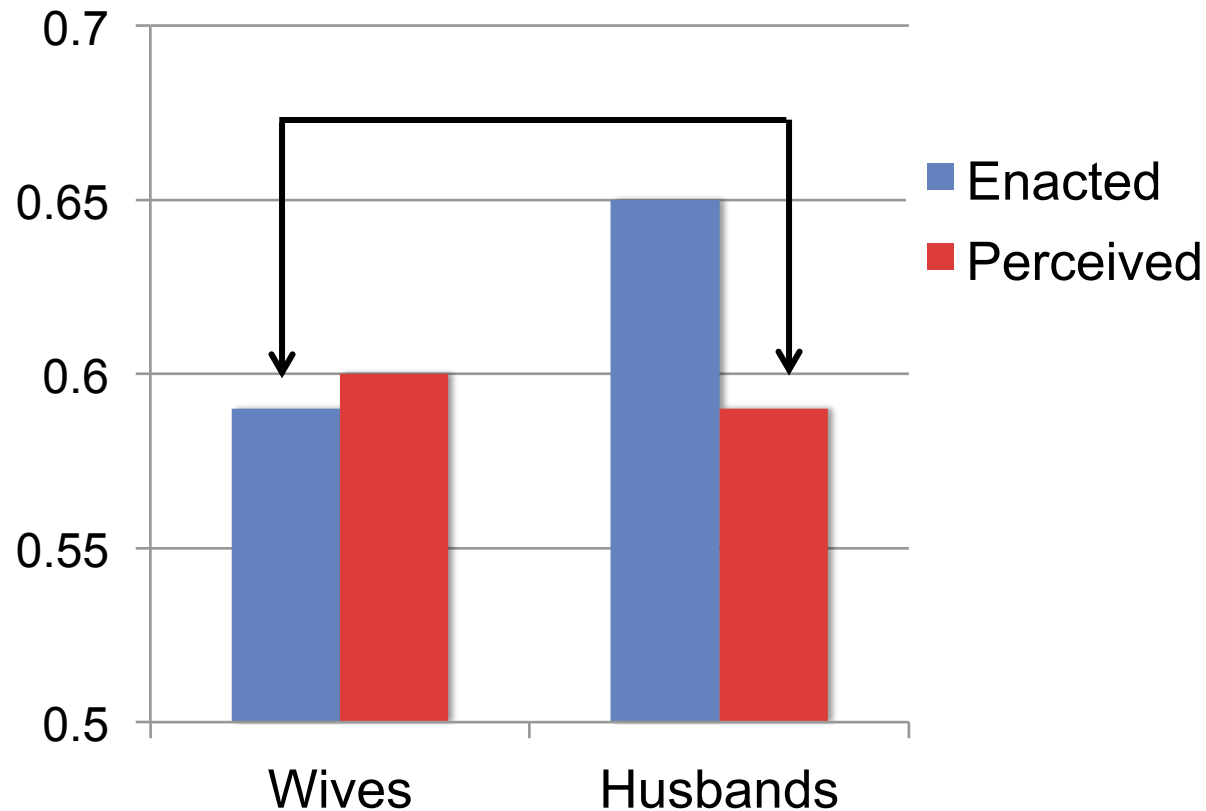
Today, my partner willingly modified her/his plans or activities for my sake.

Today, my partner voluntarily did something special for me.

Today, my partner was genuinely open and receptive to things I said or asked of her/him.

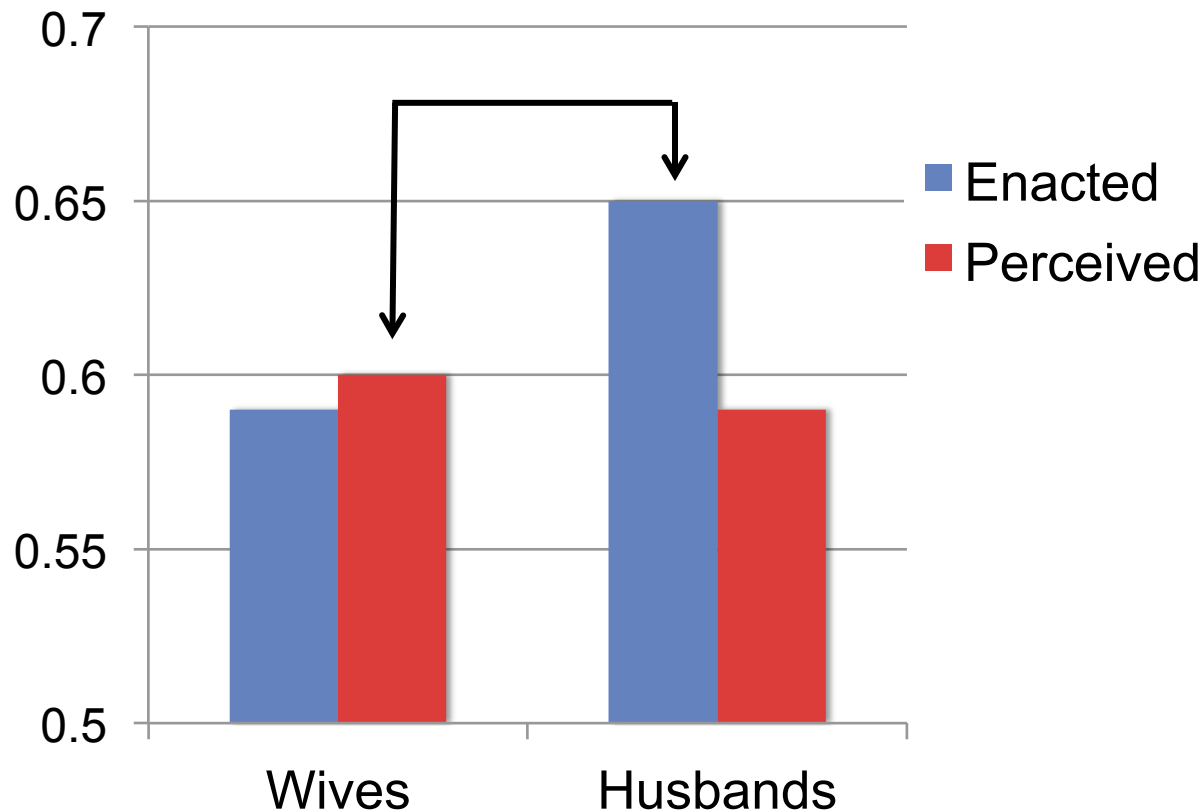
Today, my partner did something to show me that she/he respects and admires me as a person.

Daily Prevalence of Compassionate Acts



Wives and husbands largely agree about wives' actions

Daily Prevalence of Compassionate Acts



Wives and husbands don't agree so well about husbands' actions

Adopting a Dyadic Perspective: The Quasi-Signal Detection Model

		Action	
		I did it	I didn't do it
Detection “My partner was fully accepting of me today”	She says, he did it	Hit	False Alarm
	She says, he didn't do it	Miss	Correct Rejection

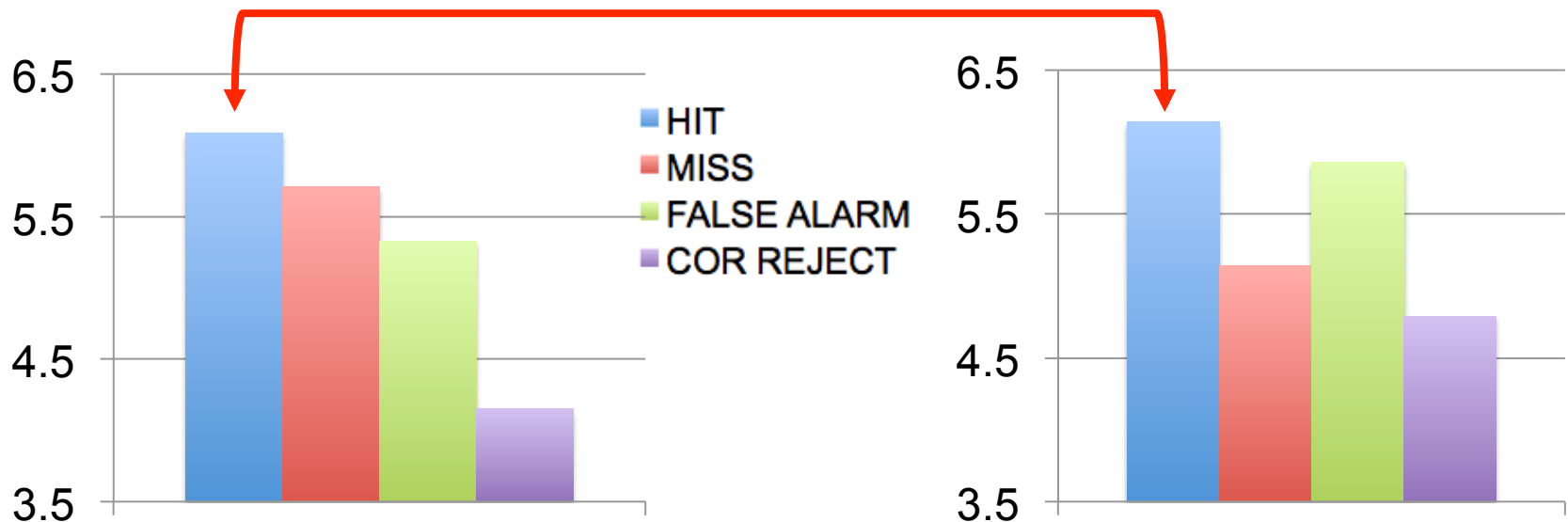
Adopting a Dyadic Perspective: The Quasi-Signal Detection Model

		Action “I was fully accepting of my partner today”	
		I did it	I didn't do it
Detection “My partner was fully accepting of me today”	She says, he did it	Hit 44%	False Alarm 16%
	She says, he didn't do it	Miss 19%	Correct Rejection 22%

Benefits to Donors

Benefits to Recipients

Shared perspective: Responsiveness happened

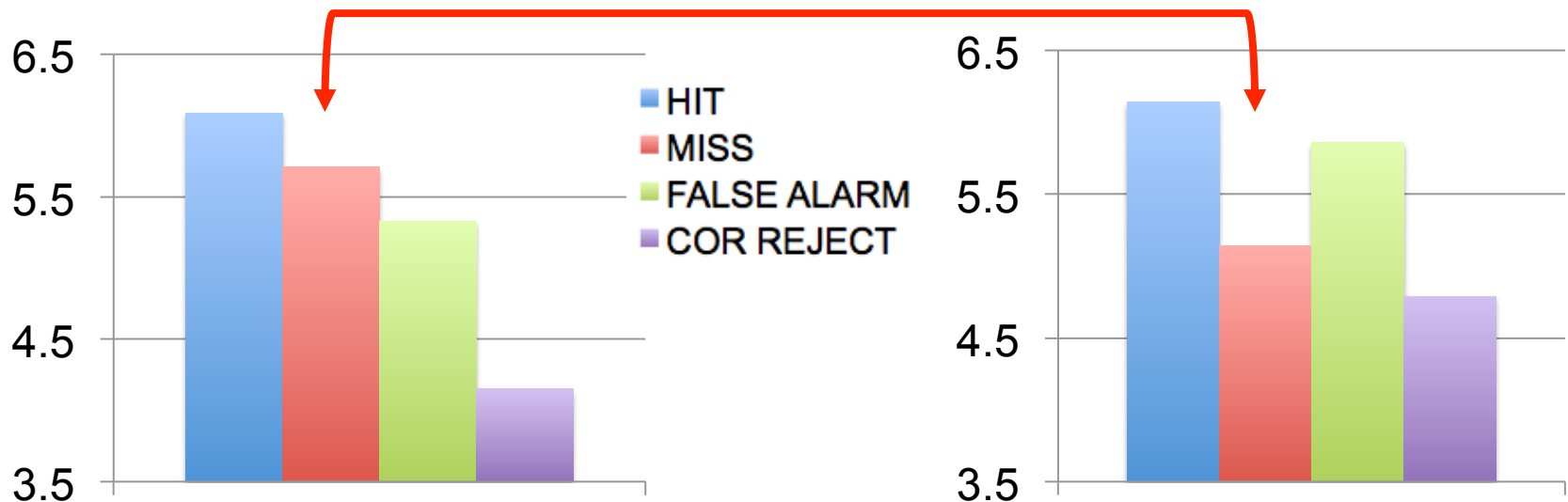


Mean levels of relationship satisfaction,
controlling for prior day satisfaction and between-person averages across days.
Source: Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, *JSPR*, 2014.

Benefits to Donors

Benefits to Recipients

Invisible Responsiveness

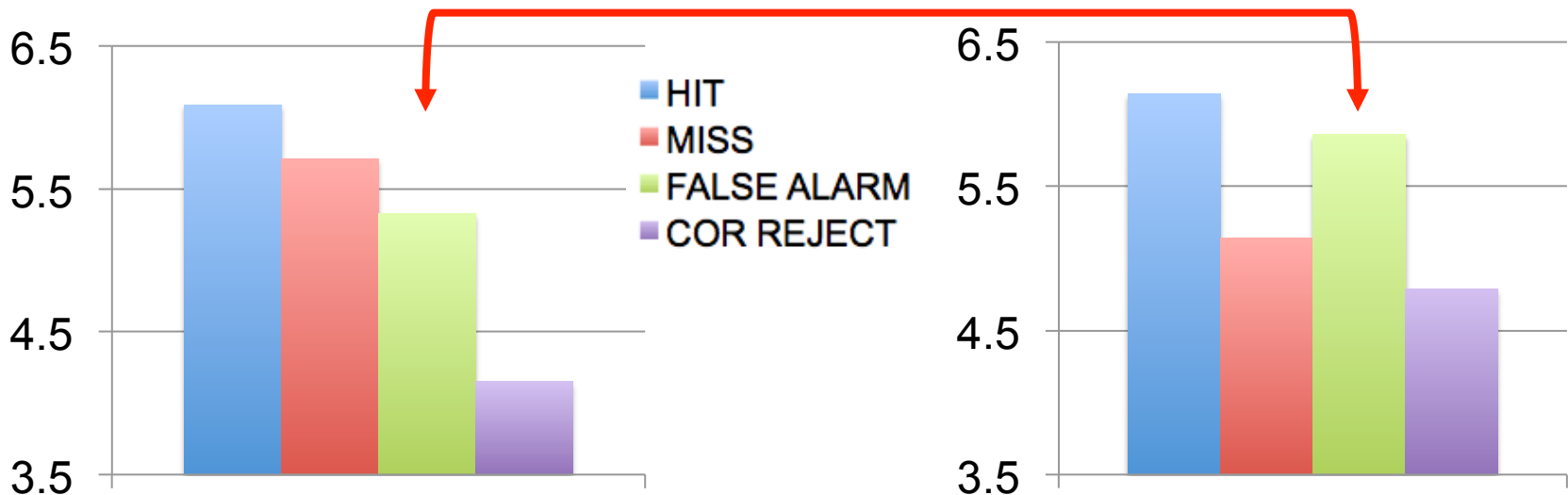


Mean levels of relationship satisfaction,
controlling for prior day satisfaction and between-person averages across days.
Source: Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, *JSPR*, 2014.

Benefits to Donors

Benefits to Recipients

Inadvertent Responsiveness

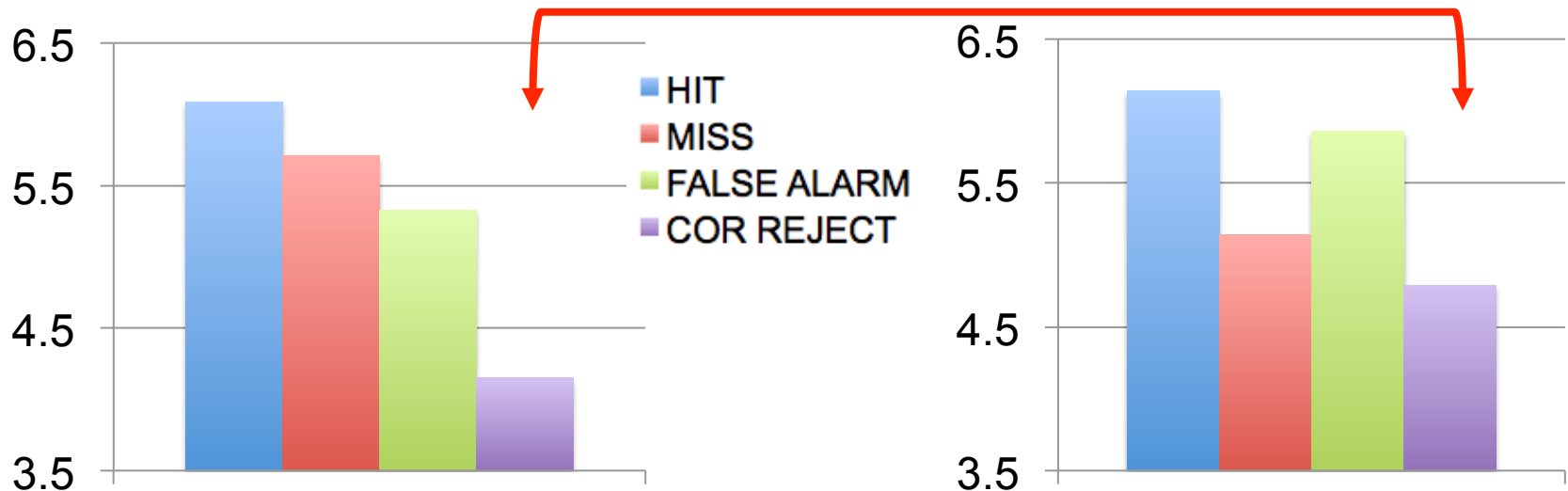


Mean levels of relationship satisfaction,
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Source: Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, *JSPR*, 2014.

Benefits to Donors

Benefits to Recipients

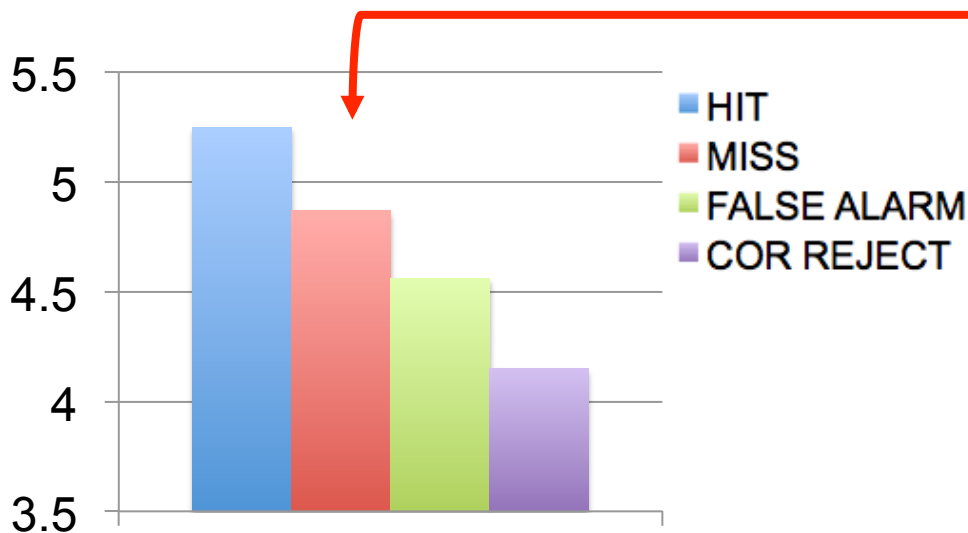
Nothing Happening



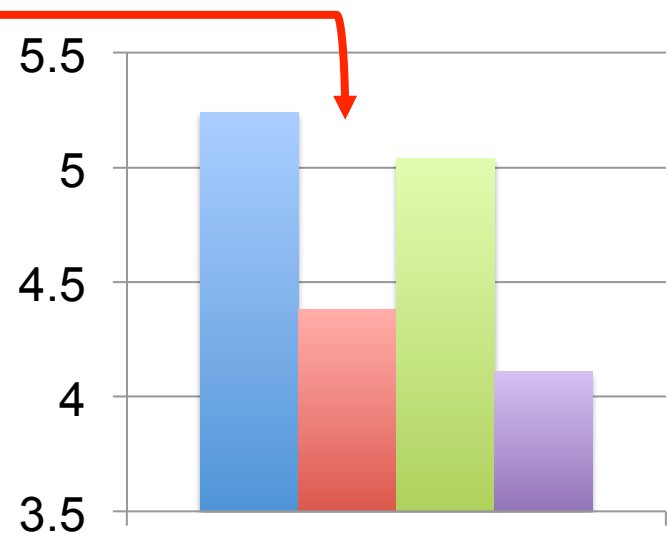
Mean levels of relationship satisfaction,
controlling for prior day satisfaction and between-person averages across days.
Source: Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, *JSPR*, 2014.

What about individual's emotional well-being?

Benefits to Donors



Benefits to Recipients



Mean levels of daily emotional well-being,
controlling for prior day satisfaction and between-person averages across days.
Source: Reis, Maniaci, & Rogge, *Emotion*, 2016.

TAKE AWAY



- Couples express responsiveness in little everyday acts of compassion.
- It's good to get responsiveness, it's better to give responsiveness, and it's best when partners mutually agree on their responsive acts.

Outline of Studies

- Responsiveness promotes a “pro-partner orientation”
- Good news!
- Responsiveness and everyday compassionate acts
- **Responsiveness and sexual desire**
- Perceived partner responsiveness lessens defensiveness

Does Responsiveness Promote or Inhibit Sexual Desire?



“Mr. Goodrich, what say we tell each other our darkest fantasies and start exploring the outer limits of modern sexuality?”

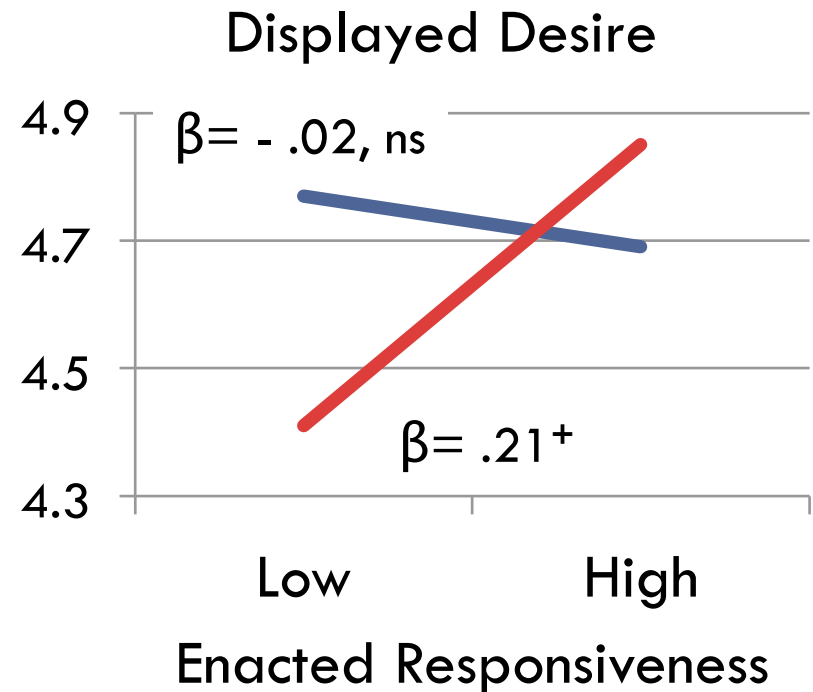
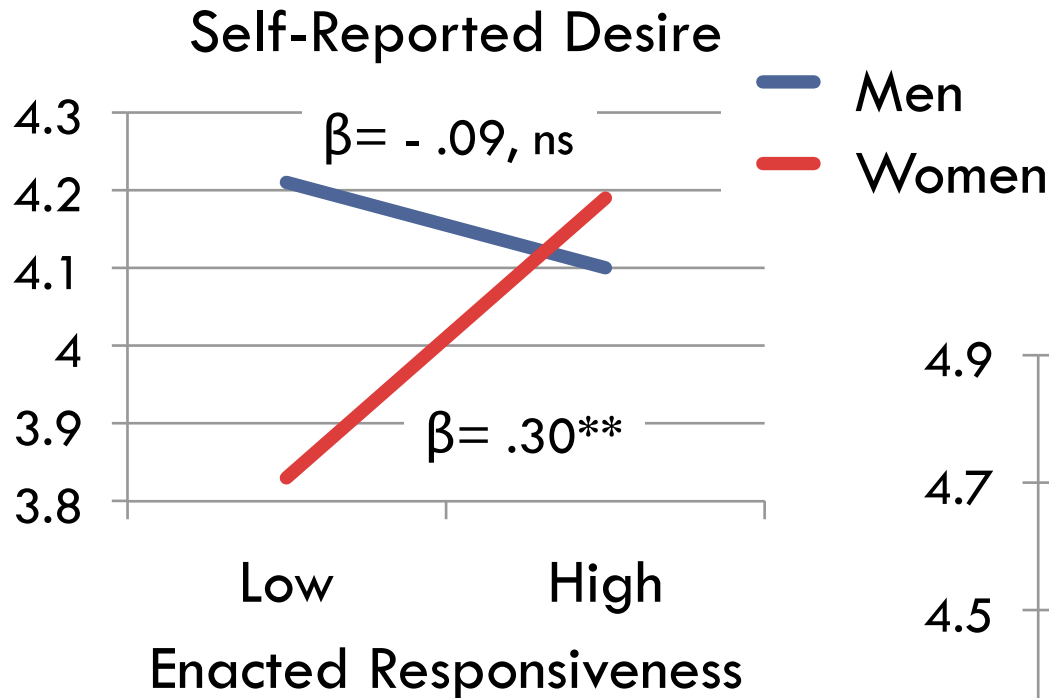


- Randomly assigned to be:
- discloser or listener
 - positive or negative event

“You are going to be left alone in the room for five minutes while being videotaped during an intimate interaction. Please note that the videotapes will be used for research purposes only and will be strictly confidential. Now, we would like you to engage in an intimate interaction with each other, such as holding hands, kissing, hugging, making out. These are only examples; feel free to express physical intimacy in any way that comes natural to you and makes you feel comfortable. ... I will knock on the door before entering the room.”

Source: Birnbaum, Reis et al., *JPSP*, 2016.

Responsiveness Promotes Sexual Desire



But what about Perceived Partner Responsiveness?

- Sexual desire declines as partners become interdependent.
- Many studies indicate that intimate partners know less about each other than they think they do.
- But people want to feel understood by their partners, and they often go to considerable lengths to try to create this understanding.

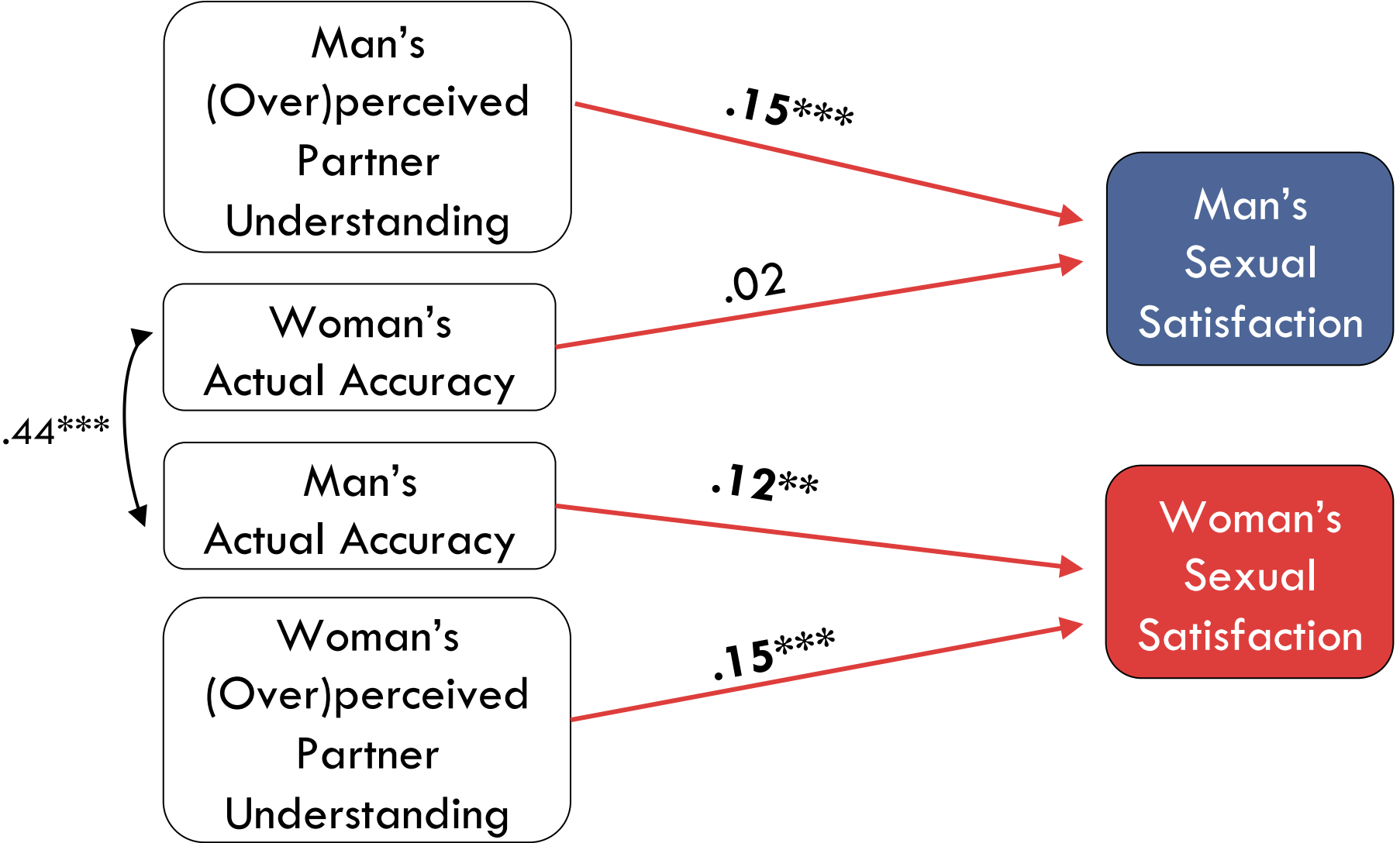
1. Actual Understanding



Theo likes:	Thea thinks that Theo likes:
Having the lights on	Having the lights on
Cuddling afterward	Cuddling afterward
Kissing	Kissing
Lots of foreplay	Lots of foreplay
Masturbating with my partner	Masturbating with my partner
Playing rough	Playing rough

2. Perceived Understanding:

Theo likes:	Theo believes that Thea thinks that Theo likes:
Having the lights on	Having the lights on
Cuddling afterward	Cuddling afterward
Kissing	Kissing
Lots of foreplay	Lots of foreplay
Masturbating with my partner	Masturbating with my partner
Playing rough	Playing rough



Source: de Jong & Reis, *PSPB*, 2014.

TAKE AWAY



- Responsiveness reinforces relationships in lots of ways, and it's sexy (in established relationships) for women (and maybe for men).
- Accurate understanding matters, but perceived understanding matters more (and probably much more).

Outline of Studies

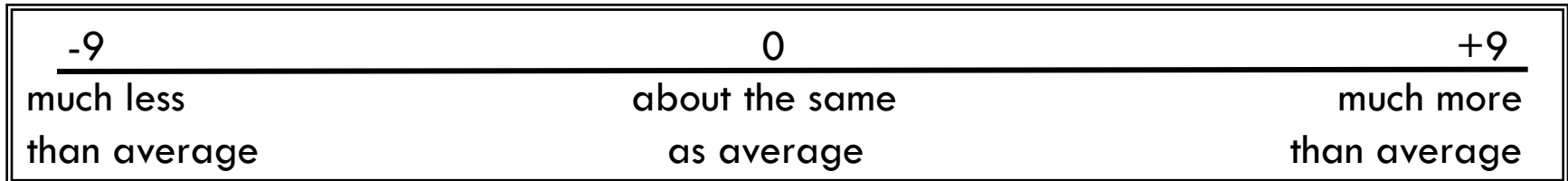
- Responsiveness promotes a “pro-partner orientation”
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- **Perceived partner responsiveness lessens defensiveness**

Another reason why responsiveness matters: Lesser defensiveness

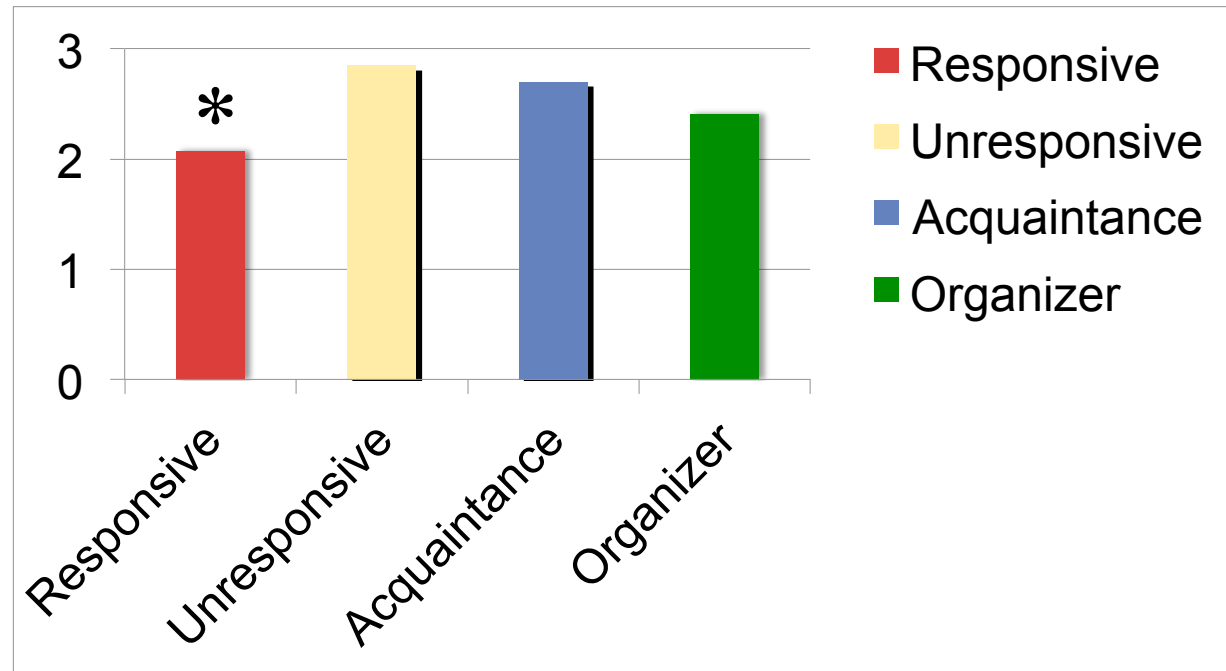
- Perceived partner responsiveness affirms one's sense of worth in a relationship context; thereby, it lessens defensiveness.
- Perceived partner non-responsiveness undermines self-worth; because it threatens self-worth, it activates a need to compensate by inflating by one's self-image.

The “better than average” effect

How logical are you, compared to the average student?

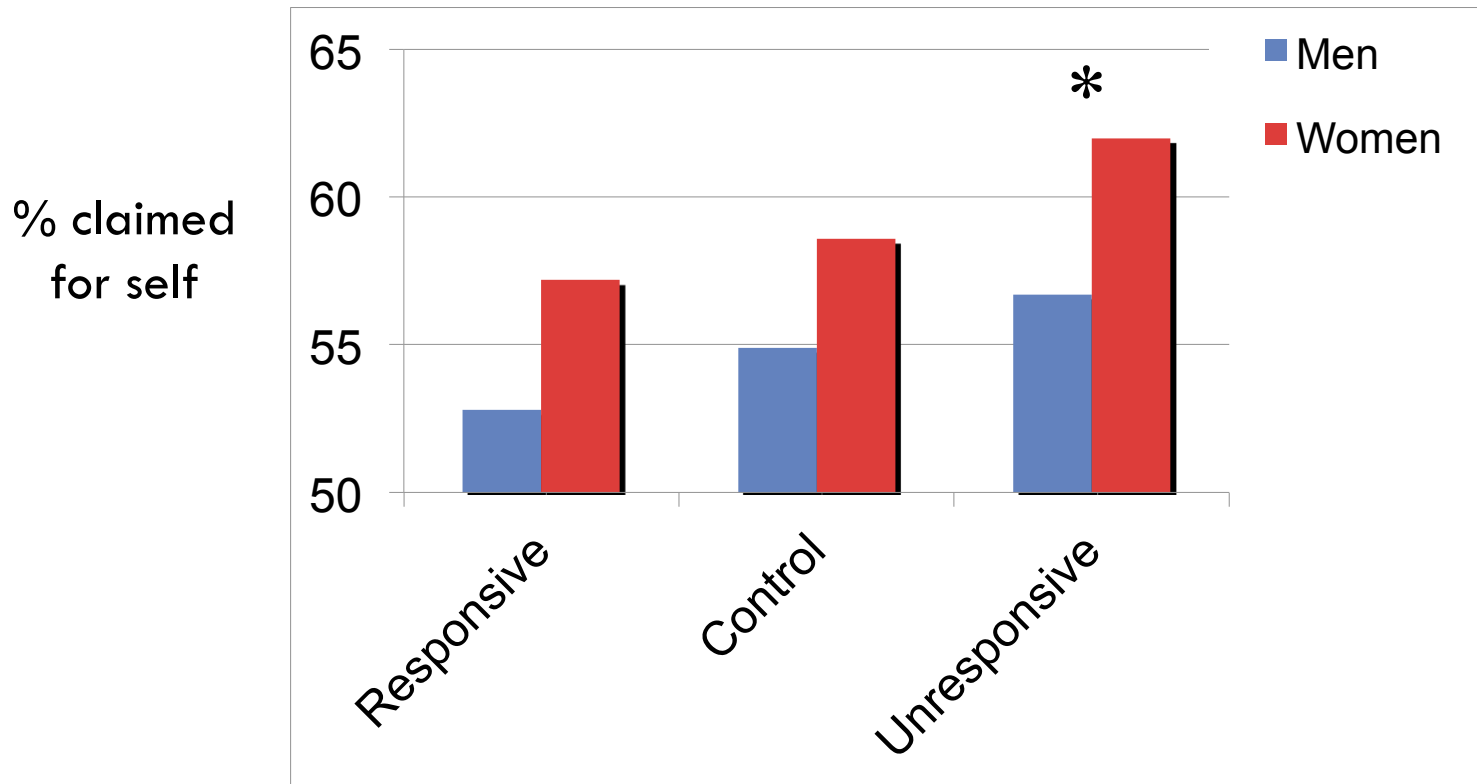


Average self-rating
on 23 traits
(cooperative, smart,
logical, attractive,
etc.)



Over-Claiming Credit for Housework

What percentage of each of the following do you personally do: cooking, cleaning, car care, taxes, etc.



TAKE AWAY



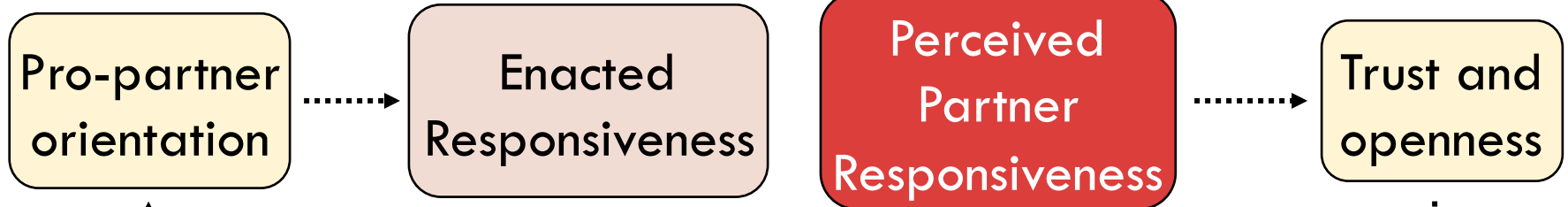
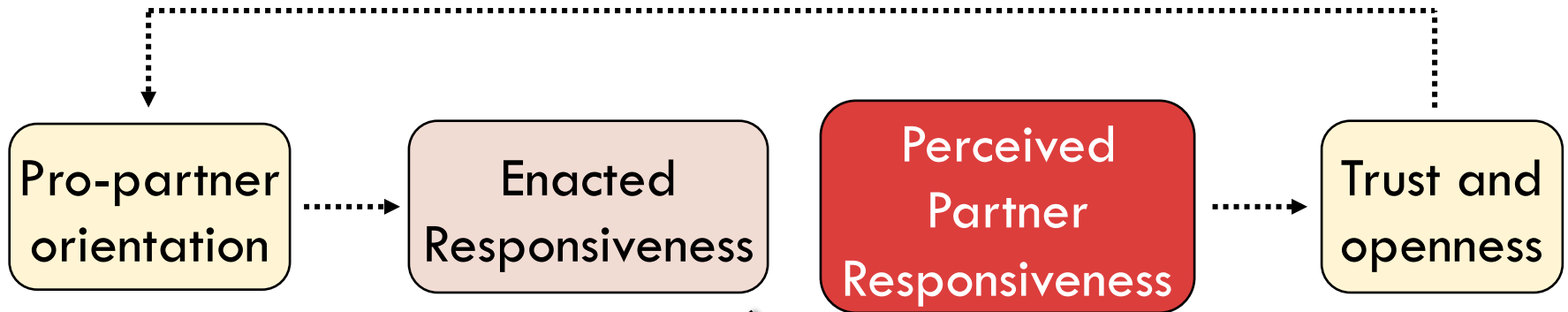
- Perceiving that partners are responsive lessens ego-protection and defensiveness.

Clinical Implications: Seeing the Forest from the Trees

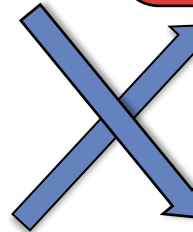


Responsiveness Fuels a Virtuous “Broaden & Build” Cycle

Partner A



Partner B



Thank You!

For making this work possible:

- Fetzer Institute
- Israel Science Foundation
- National Institutes of Health (U.S.)
- Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study
- Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council (Canada)
- Many, many colleagues and research assistants in the Rochester Relationships Lab
- Our many research participants

and to you for listening!