

Should I Stay or Should I Go? Attachment and Personality in Stable and Instable Romantic Relationships[†]

JUDITH LEHNART* and FRANZ J. NEYER

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany

Abstract

Attachment, relationship satisfaction and personality were measured in a representative longitudinal sample of young adults over 8 years with three measurement occasions. The dynamics between personality and relationship development were examined in two groups: stable continuers (N = 133), who remained with the same partner; and relationship changers (N = 92), who ended their partnership and entered into a new relationship. Partnership satisfaction but not personality predicted relationship stability. Neuroticism and attachment quality were more stable in continuers than in changers. Cross-lagged analyses of personality and relationship quality revealed a more consistent pattern of reciprocal influences in stable relationships, showing that dynamic transactions between personality and relationship quality are more likely to occur in stable social environments. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: personality development; attachment; romantic relationships; young adulthood

INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood has been recently described as a distinct developmental period between adolescence and young adulthood for the ages of 18 to almost 30 (Arnett, 2000). One of its remarkable characteristics is the exploration of different lifestyles, especially regarding romantic relationships. However, emerging adulthood is not only a time of exploring relationships it is also the time when dating relationships are transformed into more serious romantic relationships (Furman, 2002). During this time, emerging adults may consider whether the person he or she is dating is the right person with whom to start a family. Will our love last? Should I stay with this partner or should I go? If I stay, will I be happy? If I go, will everything change? The changes that come along with trying out

*Correspondence to: Judith Lehnart, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Psychologie, Rudower Chaussee 18, D-12489 Berlin, Germany. E-mail: lehnartj@rz.hu-berlin.de

[†]Ivan Mervielde was the action editor of this article.

several relationships imply instability in the immediate social environment, which in turn may affect personality and upcoming relationship quality.

In the present article, we study dynamic transactions between romantic relationship qualities and basic personality traits across emerging adulthood. We incorporate the framework of dynamic transactions (Neyer & Asendorpf, 2001; Neyer & Lehnart, 2006) to study the effects of environmental stability on personality and relationship development. In particular, we conceptualize environmental stability as the stability of partner relationships because romantic relationships are an important aspect of the social environment (e.g. Roberts, Robins, Caspi, & Trzesniewski, 2003). The emerging adulthood years provide the ideal framework to study the beginning and ending of romantic relationships (Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002). Young people do not postpone relationship experiences rather there has been a change in the institutionalization of romantic relationships. Not only has the mean age for entering into marriage increased over the last decades in Western countries, but also the number of cohabiting but unmarried couples. Hence, we investigate romantic relationships in general and include a variety of personality traits. We nevertheless keep a strong focus on neuroticism, building our research on the well-replicated finding of the relationship between marital instability and neuroticism (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1993).

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG ADULthood

Personality stability and change

Stability and change of personality traits are no longer seen as contradictory, but rather as two complementing sides of personality development (Caspi & Roberts, 2001; Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). Over the last decade, many studies have convincingly shown that during young adulthood personality changes towards maturity, as was proposed by Gordon Allport (1961): Young adults become more emotionally stable, agreeable and conscientious, while the mean level of openness and extraversion remains fairly stable (McCrae et al., 1999, 2000; Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006; Srivastava, John, & Gosling, 2003). At the same time, the rank-order stability of personality traits during this age period is moderately high (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Roberts & Caspi, 2003; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003). These findings show that individual differences in personality traits are to some extent crystallized in young adulthood, but also leave room for interindividual differences in change (Helson, Jones, & Kwan, 2002; Mroczek & Spiro, 2003; Roberts et al., 2006).

In addition to these general principles of personality development, Caspi, Bem, and Elder (1989) described the *interactional continuity principle* suggesting that personality stability is promoted through constant interaction patterns. Long-term continuity of personality and relationship experiences is achieved through evocative consequences of reciprocal interactions. If interactional continuity promotes stability of personality and relationship qualities, does interactional discontinuity on the other hand lead to personality change? This notion is not implied in the interactional continuity principle. On the contrary, interactional discontinuity is thought to set in motion the adaptation processes that seek to re-establish continuity by virtue of one's personality. Consider, for example, partner change. Individuals may search for and finally select a new relationship partner who fits their personality traits. Concomitantly they evoke responses from their partner because of their specific personality make-up, and continuity will be re-established through

new interaction patterns. This is in accordance with the *enduring dynamics model of relationship patterns* (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000) which emphasizes the importance of the early phase of a relationship. Interaction patterns which are established during this phase are maintained over time. These constant patterns can be influential for personality development in a delayed manner, whereas personality traits may be more influential in the beginning of a relationship. Over time, interactional patterns become increasingly stable and more and more part of what constitutes an individual's personality.

Environmental stability and change

In the debate about stability and change in core personality characteristics, the stability of the environment is often discussed as a potential condition of personality stability (Sameroff, 1983): Not traits are the source of stable behavioural patterns, but the stable environmental conditions in which an individual lives are. Consequently the observed level of stability can be regarded as an artefact of the environmental stability. However, environmental stability can also be a function of personality (Roberts et al., 2003). If personality traits lead individuals to select certain environments, it can be assumed that some personality patterns are associated with stable environments whereas others are associated with instability or change. In the present research, we compared the transactions between personality and relationship variables in stable and instable environments in order to disentangle the confounded sources of stability. The choice of relationship stability and instability as an indicator of environmental stability is based on the assumption that social relationships are the proximal context of personality development.

Relationships as moderators of stability and change

The life course can be reconstructed as a sequence of relationship transitions (e.g. Caspi et al., 1989; Elder & Shanahan, 2006) because people are embedded in important social or relationship contexts through their lives (Cooper, 2000). Several studies have shown that personality change is associated with social experiences. Especially new relationship experiences such as new partnerships can be regarded as a catalyst of personality development. Neyer and Asendorpf (2001) reported that the transition to the first stable romantic relationship was associated with the maturational trend of decreasing neuroticism and that later relationship break-up did not reverse this effect. Robins et al. (2002) found that being in a dissatisfying and abusive relationship was associated with becoming more anxious, alienated and angry. In contrast, stable satisfying relationships were related to decreasing negative emotionality (Robins et al., 2002). Similarly, Roberts and Bogg (2004) found that being in a stable marriage was related to an increase in conscientiousness. Furthermore, marital tension and lower marital satisfaction have been shown to be related to increasing neuroticism from age 21 to 52 (Roberts & Chapman, 2000). In a similar vein, Roberts, Helson, and Klohnen (2002) reported a slower rate of increase in social dominance between age 27 and 43 after a divorce in young adulthood.

ATTACHMENT DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Since the seminal work of Hazan and Shaver (1987) attachment in adult romantic relationships has been intensively investigated (e.g. Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney &

Noller, 1996; Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004; Sümer & Cozzarelli, 2004). Romantic partners serve as attachment figures and it is very likely that specific attachment patterns develop if the relationships are stable and enduring (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). The development of an attachment relationship towards a romantic partner can be regarded as a normative developmental task during emerging adulthood marking the transformation of dating to committed romantic relationships.

In the original conception of Bowlby (1982), attachment was supposed to be stable because an individual's attachment style was thought to develop through early interactions with the primary caregiver and to be implemented as an internal working model that guides attachment related behaviour in all later relationships. However, from a developmental and from an individual differences perspective this assumption is questionable (Asendorpf, Banse, Wilpers, & Neyer, 1997). Each interaction partner constitutes a new environment that invokes specific behaviours and experiences. Hence, the consistencies across several relationship partners should only be small to moderate. Only a few studies have investigated the consistency of attachment across different types of relationships, and these have confirmed a relationship-specific view of attachment (e.g. Asendorpf et al., 1997; Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996; Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002). With our study we go even further and investigate whether the change of a romantic relationship partner influences change of attachment over time. Are Lisa's security and dependency towards Paul the same as they were towards Michael? Accordingly, this study contributes to the debate whether attachment is a trait or an attribute of a specific relationship (e.g. Feeney & Noller, 1996). Given that the consistency between different types of relationships such as parents and peers is only small to moderate we assume that attachment can change as a result of partner change considering that both relationship partners influence the relationship-specific attachment.

The conceptualization of attachment as applied in this article is based on the relationship-specific model of attachment developed by Asendorpf and colleagues (1997). The two-dimensional model consists of the orthogonal dimensions secure–fearful and independent–dependent. The independent pole of the dependent–independent dimension corresponds closely to Bartholomew's (1990) dismissing style, whereas the dependent pole refers to one's dependency on the relationship partner with regard to his or her affection, support and understanding. However, the security and dependency dimensions also seem to be related to two dimensions of the three-factor model by Collins and Read (1990), the close and depend factors, which are positively correlated and load negatively on avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Similarly, security and dependency are moderately positively correlated within individuals. This correlation seems to express an increasing sense of reliance that partners may experience over time: The more partners become securely attached, the more they have a sense of feeling dependent. It is therefore likely that the development of a secure attachment is accompanied by an emerging experience of dependency.

Several studies have shown that partner attachment and relationship satisfaction are related aspects of relationship quality (Collins & Read, 1990; Kachadourian et al., 2004; Sümer & Cozzarelli, 2004). Securely attached individuals tend to be more satisfied with their current romantic relationship. Moreover, the dimension security–anxiety is significantly correlated with personality traits in romantic relationships. In the study by Asendorpf and colleagues (1997), more extraverted, more agreeable, and more conscientious persons were more securely attached to their partner. The reverse was true for neuroticism. Higher neuroticism was related to lower levels of security. With

respect to dependency, only agreeableness was significantly related to this attachment dimension. More agreeable persons were more likely to be dependent on their partner. Over and above these cross-sectional relations between personality and attachment, the dynamic-transactional model of personality and relationship development assumes that the change in attachment resulting from partner change can be due to earlier personality development or can serve as a basis for personality change. The study of these dynamics requires a longitudinal approach and to the best of our knowledge, no study has hitherto addressed the dynamic development of both personality and attachment in young adulthood with respect to enduring and changing partner relationships.

PERSONALITY-RELATIONSHIP-TRANSACTIONS

A conceptual model of dynamic transactions is shown in Figure 1. We consider three types of transaction: Firstly, the result of completed transactions can be conceived in the concurrent relations of personality and relationship constructs (correlation *a* in Figure 1). This cross-sectional correlation reflects selection processes as well as mutual influences prior to the assessment, suggesting that people select themselves into social environments that fit their personality structure. This initial self-selection may evoke unique relationship experiences, which subsequently may be shaped by personality traits, but at the same time may also have effects on further personality development (Caspi et al., 1989; Caspi & Roberts, 2001). Secondly and more importantly, the direct influences of personality on relationships as well as direct influences of relationships on personality over time are represented by the cross-paths *b* and *c*. These paths are controlled for concurrent correlations and the stability of the dependent variable entailing the direct effect of the independent variable. For example, path *b* represents how a personality trait influences later change of a relationship experience whilst taking into account an initial personality-relationship fit. Conversely, path *c* represents a relationship effect on later personality change. Thirdly, correlated change is another important aspect of dynamic transactions

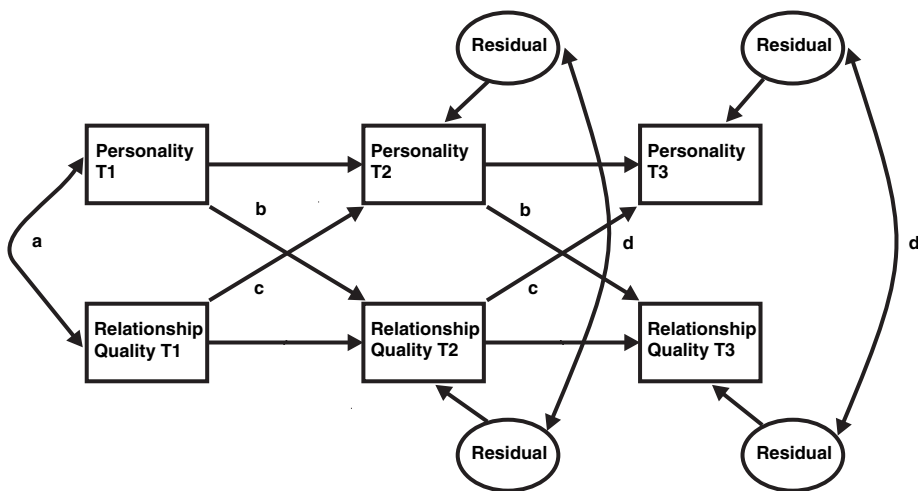


Figure 1. Cross-lagged panel model for personality and relationship quality over three measurement occasions.

(paths *d* in Figure 1). Correlated change reflects the common change in the two variables when all antecedent factors are controlled for. In other words correlated change includes the shared dynamics between personality and relationships when their initial as well as their cross-lagged associations are taken into account. The shared cumulative effects of personality and relationship experiences are expressed in the amount of correlated change (Roberts et al., 2003; Fraley & Roberts, 2005). Our conceptual model of personality-relationship transaction takes these aspects into account by realizing a cross-lagged panel design where personality traits and experiences of the partner relationship are measured three times over 8 years.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In our longitudinal study we assessed personality and relationship variables at three measurement occasions. Moreover, information on relationship history obtained at the third measurement occasion enabled us to identify two groups of partnership-experienced participants: continuers, who were committed to this relationship and remained with the same partner, and relationship changers, who split up after the first measurement occasion and entered into new relationships. With this approach we identified one group of participants in a stable relationship environment and one group in a dynamic, changing environment. In comparison to past research on romantic relationships, we not only aimed at predicting relationship stability, but also used relationship stability as an independent variable to predict the strength of personality effects on relationship outcomes, and vice versa. We addressed three main research questions:

1. Which personality and relationship characteristics predict relationship continuation?
2. How stable are personality traits and relationship experiences in changing relationship environments?
3. How strongly do personality traits affect change in relationship quality and how strongly do relationship experiences affect personality change?

In accordance with the interactional continuity principle we assumed that personality influences on relationships are stronger and more likely to occur in changing relationship environments because individuals most likely try to re-establish continuity by virtue of their personality traits. In addition, we hypothesized that, in accordance with the enduring dynamics model, cumulative interaction patterns lead to increasing stability of relationship quality in stable romantic relationships and facilitate reciprocal transactions with personality development.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were drawn from a representative sample of young adults in Germany (for a more detailed description of the sample see Neyer, 1999; Neyer & Asendorpf, 2001; Neyer & Lehnart, in press) assessed at three measurement occasions, each 4 years apart. We selected those participants from the panel sample who were in a relationship for at least 6 months at the first measurement occasion. Of the 339 participants in the larger panel

sample, 253 (155 women) met this inclusion criterion. Mean age of the participants at Time 1 was 25 years ($SD=3.7$), ranging from 18 to 29 years. Regarding educational achievement, we slightly oversampled participants with a high school diploma (43.9% vs. 28.9% of the general population).

Based on retrospective biographical reports on relationship history and current marital and relationship status, we identified two different groups of participants: **continuers** ($n=133$, 87 women), who remained with the same partner over the whole study period, and **relationship changers** ($n=92$, 58 women), who split up with their former partner and found a new partner, either once or even several times.¹ Most participants in the group of changers only changed their partner once ($N=50$, 68%), and some twice ($N=28$, 21%). Mean age of the continuers ($M=26$) was significantly higher than that of relationship changers ($M=23$) at Time 1 ($t(224)=-7.5$, $p>0.01$, $d=1.0$). In order to rule out differences between the two groups in their socioeconomic status, we tested whether there were any differences in the level of education between continuers and changers and the Time 1 singles. The distribution of educational achievement did not differ between groups ($\chi^2=12.18$, $df=6$, n.s.).

Measures

At all three measurement occasions, participants received questionnaires by mail on (a) biographical information, (b) personality, (c) relationship quality of romantic relationships.

Biographical information

Participants were asked on all three-measurement occasions to indicate their sex, age and their marital, occupational and educational status. Moreover, people were asked whether they were involved in a serious relationship, how long the relationship lasted, and whether they had children. At the third measurement occasion, participants were also asked to retrospectively give information on transitions during the past years, for example regarding the beginnings and endings of romantic relationships. We also assessed relationship duration by asking participants about the length of their current relationship in years.

Personality

We assessed the Big Five with the German version of the NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993). The NEO-FFI consists of 12 items per scale, which were rated on a five-point likert-type scale. Due to the restricted space of the questionnaire, we did not include the openness scale at Time 1 (accordingly we are not able to analyse change in openness over 8 years). All items were randomly mixed and presented in a five-point agreement format rating, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely true).

Relationship quality

We assessed three aspects of relationship quality: attachment security, attachment dependency, and relationship satisfaction. The satisfaction with the current relationship

¹Participants ($n=28$, **later singles**) who had a partner at the beginning of our study, but split up later and did not find a new partner over the course of our study were excluded from the sample because we were interested in effects of stable versus changing relationships on personality and relationship quality. This does not apply to those who remained single after a relationship break-up because they did not create a new relationship environment with a new partner. Furthermore as they did not remain in the same partnership they do not have continuous interactions with a partner and thus could neither be defined as continuers nor as changers.

with a romantic partner was assessed using the German version of the Relationship Assessment Scale by Sander and Böcker (1993). The RAS-scale consists of 7 items, which were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 'not at all/very little' to 5 'absolutely/very much'). Relationship specific attachment was measured with the Relationship-specific Attachment Scales developed by Asendorpf et al. (1997) (see also Neyer, 2002; Neyer & Voigt, 2004). These scales assess two related dimensions of relationship specific attachment, namely security and dependency with 6 items for the security and 8 items for the dependency dimension. Participants were asked to answer these questions according to their current or—if they were not currently involved in a romantic relationship—with regard to their former partner.² The items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 'I do not agree at all' to 5 'I fully agree').

Gender differences

Regarding the overrepresentation of women in our sample of participants with a romantic relationship partner, we tested whether men and women in the two subgroups differed from each other and from the participants in the panel sample who had no partner at Time 1 (singles). We did not find any differences between males and females in education in the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 0.577$, $df = 3$, n.s.) or in any of the subgroups. Neither changers ($\chi^2 = 3.94$, $df = 3$, n.s.), nor continuers ($\chi^2 = 1.15$, $df = 3$, n.s.), nor singles at Time 1 ($\chi^2 = 3.82$, $df = 3$, n.s.) showed any difference in the distribution of educational background between males and females.

All relationship variables were unrelated to age or gender ($r_s < 0.10$, n.s.). Due to the fact that some of the personality traits were slightly correlated with age or gender ($r_s < 0.20$), we corrected personality variables for age and gender and used the corrected variables for further analyses.

RESULTS

Internal consistencies and intercorrelations

Internal consistencies and intercorrelations for personality and relationship scales at Time 1 are displayed in Table 1. The internal consistencies were satisfactory and comparable to those reported by Borkenau and Ostendorf (1993). The intercorrelations of the personality variables did not differ from the intercorrelations in the full sample (for a more detailed description see Neyer & Lehnart, in press), and were similar to the results by Borkenau and Ostendorf (1993).

The attachment variables were significantly related to relationship satisfaction. Dependency accounted for 20% of the variance in relationship satisfaction and security for another 23% of the variance in a hierarchical linear regression analysis. As in the samples studied by Asendorpf and colleagues (1997), attachment security and dependency were moderately correlated ($r = 0.24$). All three relationship qualities were differentially related to the personality traits. Attachment security showed the most homogeneous pattern of relationships with personality. That is, individuals high in attachment security had a

²The reference to a former partner does only apply to the group of changers. Participants were asked to indicate whether they answered the question with regard to the current or former partner. Of the 92 changers only 16 referred to a former partner at Time 3 and there was no significant difference in the perception of relationship quality between the groups ($t_s < 1.86$, n.s.).

Table 1. Intercorrelations and internal consistencies for personality and relationship variables at Time 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Neuroticism	0.80						
2 Extraversion	-0.28	0.72					
3 Agreeableness	<i>-0.13</i>	0.24	0.69				
4 Conscientiousness	-0.21	0.07	0.11	0.81			
5 Relationship Satisfaction	-0.26	0.05	<i>0.14</i>	0.18	0.88		
6 Security	-0.37	0.24	0.32	0.33	0.57	0.70	
7 Dependency	0.07	-0.11	0.21	0.02	0.45	0.24	0.70

Note: $N = 225$ ($N = 208$ for relationship satisfaction³).

Coefficient alphas are presented along the diagonal.

Correlations in boldface are significant at $p < 0.01$, correlations in italics are significant at $p < 0.05$.

more socially desirable personality profile. They were less neurotic ($r = -0.37$), more extraverted ($r = 0.24$), more agreeable ($r = 0.32$), and more conscientious ($r = 0.33$). Relationship satisfaction was similarly related to neuroticism ($r = -0.26$) and conscientiousness ($r = 0.18$), whereas attachment dependency was only positively associated with agreeableness ($r = 0.21$).

Stability and change of personality traits and relationship quality

Means, standard deviations, mean-level change, and rank-order stability over 8 years for personality traits and relationship quality are shown in Table 2 separately for continuers and changers. Both groups did not differ in their personality traits at Time 1 (all t s (224) < 1.96 , p s > 0.10 , n.s.), but they showed differential stability for neuroticism and agreeableness: Whereas continuers decreased slightly stronger in neuroticism ($d = -0.36$) as compared to changers ($d = -0.22$), the rank-order stability of neuroticism over 8 years was significantly higher for continuers ($r = 0.65$ vs. 0.46).⁴ In addition, continuers became more agreeable over the course of the study ($d = 0.37$), whilst changers did not change in agreeableness ($d = -0.05$, n.s.). In summary, the pattern of findings suggests that normative change in personality occurred in continuers, whereas relationship changers showed more differential development, at least regarding neuroticism.

With respect to relationship quality, the groups differed significantly at the first measurement occasion. Compared to continuers, changers were less satisfied with their relationship (t (224) = 4.54, $d = 0.60$) and less dependent on their partner (t (224) = 4.01, $d = 0.54$). Relationship quality was less stable in the group of relationship changers. Changers increased in both dependency ($d = 0.34$) and relationship satisfaction ($d = 0.43$), but not in security. In contrast, continuers decreased substantially over time in relationship satisfaction ($d = -0.29$). Moreover, the continuers showed higher rank-order stabilities of attachment security ($r = 0.27$ vs. 0.15) and dependency ($r = 0.52$ vs. 0.36). This pattern of

³ $N = 17$ individuals did not report relationship satisfaction at Time 3. In order to profit from the power of the larger sample we tested whether these participants differed from the rest in terms of personality traits, attachment or relationship satisfaction at time 1. We did not find any differences. As those participants are a perfect subsample of the group of changers, we decided to use the whole sample whenever possible. Therefore only analyses for relationship satisfaction are conducted with a smaller sample.

⁴We tested differences in rank-order stability in two steps. First we used Fisher's R - to Z transformation and tested the difference in Z -values for significance. Second we tested the stability parameters in the cross-lagged panel model for equality between groups. Only if both tests were significant group differences were interpreted in terms of differential stability.

Table 2. Means (T1), standard deviations (T1), mean-level change and rank-order stability over 8 years for personality traits and relationship qualities

	Continuers				Changers			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
Personality traits								
Neuroticism	2.55	0.58	-0.36	0.65_a	2.60	0.57	-0.22	0.46_a
Extraversion	3.41	0.47	-0.08	0.57	3.46	0.54	0.20	0.63
Agreeableness	3.65	0.46	0.37_a	0.49	3.70	0.48	-0.05 _a	0.59
Conscientiousness	3.76	0.53	0.52	0.59	3.70	0.56	0.65	0.63
Relationship quality								
Security	4.35	0.57	-0.18	0.27_a	4.20	0.60	0.07	0.15 _a
Dependency	3.23 _a	0.58	-0.14 _b	0.52_c	2.91 _a	0.55	0.34_b	0.36_c
Relationship satisfaction	4.25 _a	0.53	-0.29_b	0.44	3.88 _a	0.65	0.43_b	0.45

Note: *d* mean level change (Cohen's *d*) over 8 years, significant changes are printed in boldface ($p < 0.05$). *r* rank-order stability over 8 years, significant stabilities are printed in boldface ($p < 0.05$). Means, *ds*, or correlations in a given row sharing the same subscript differ at $p < 0.05$. Significant mean differences were obtained from *t*-tests, differences in *ds* from repeated measures analyses of variance, and significant differences in correlations from comparisons using Fisher's *Z*-values.

differential change reflects that relationship qualities as perceived by the participants were not as stable as their personality traits, but varied as features of their ongoing or changing relationships.

Overall, the rank-order stability was significantly smaller for relationship variables (mean $r = 0.37$) than for personality traits (mean $r = 0.58$; $Z = 2.89$, $p < 0.01$). This pattern confirmed our expectation on higher stability of personality traits versus relationship experiences and was replicated for both continuers (mean $r = 0.57$ vs. 0.41) and changers (mean $r = 0.58$ vs. 0.32).

Prediction of relationship continuation

In order to predict whether a person remained with his or her partner or not, i.e. whether he/she was considered to be a continuer or a changer, we conducted a linear regression analysis with the three relationship variables (attachment dependency, attachment security, relationship satisfaction) as predictors. Relationship continuity was predicted by relationship satisfaction ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) and dependency ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$), but not by attachment security ($R^2 = 0.11$).⁵ After controlling for the duration of the relationship at Time 1 ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.22$), relationship satisfaction remained a significant predictor of relationship continuation ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.07$) whereas the effect of attachment dependency disappeared ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.08$ n.s., $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$). Thus, the effect of dependency was mediated through longer relationship duration. This result was additionally supported by a small but substantial correlation between dependency and relationship duration at Time 1 ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), highlighting that dependency needed time to develop (Fraley & Shaver, 2000), and did not contribute to relationship continuation once relationship duration was controlled.

⁵Results of a logistic regression (Exp(B) = 2.22 for relationship satisfaction, Exp(B) = 1.85 for dependency, Pseudo $R^2 = 0.14$; 69% correct predictions) were similar to the linear regression.

Personality-relationship transactions

We conducted longitudinal path analyses over three measurement occasions with LISREL 8.54 and used multiple group comparisons for a simultaneous test of differences or similarities in all model parameters between the groups (Reinecke, 2005). The advantage of a multiple group comparison within the SEM framework over multiple regression analysis lies in the simultaneous estimation of all model parameters. Whether path coefficients differ substantially between groups can be tested through model comparisons. A restricted model that assumes the same parameter value for both groups can be compared with a model that allows different parameter estimates between groups. Thus, we could directly investigate group-differences in the stability of the variables and in the strengths of the relationship between personality and relationship variables.⁶

Figure 1 shows the general cross-lagged panel model for personality and relationship quality. In total, we tested 12 models (3 relationship qualities x 4 personality traits). We started our analyses with a fully restricted basic model, not allowing for group differences in any model parameter. The only fully restricted models that yielded a satisfactory fit were the models for extraversion where no cross-lagged effects or correlated change occurred for both groups. In cases where the model fit was not acceptable ($RMSEA > 0.10$, $\chi^2/df > 2$, $CFI < 0.90$) we fully relaxed all restrictions and computed different parameters for both groups. In a stepwise approach we tested for each parameter that was significantly different from 0 ($t > 1.96$) whether the equality constraint led to a decrease in model fit. Consequently, significant differences between continuers and changers were only interpreted if the fit of the model improved significantly ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df > 5$) after relaxing the equality constraint. If the model fit remained good, we assumed that the groups did not differ in this parameter. The path coefficients and correlations displayed in Tables 3–5 met this criterion.⁷ All models showed a satisfactory to good model fit (all $RMSEA < 0.08$, all $\chi^2/df < 2$, all $CFI > 0.95$). With this strict procedure we ensured that we did not interpret path coefficients that were only significant by chance despite the large number of coefficients in our models.

The dynamic transactions between personality and relationship quality are described in four steps. First, concurrent relations, i.e. cross-sectional correlations at Time1, will be illustrated for both groups (indicated by coefficient *a* in Figure 1). Second, personality effects on relationship change between the first and second as well as second and third assessment will be described (paths *b* in Figure 1). Third, relationship effects on personality change (paths *c* in Figure 1) will be specified. Fourth, we consider correlated change between personality traits and relationship qualities (coefficients *d* in Figure 1).

⁶We accounted for non-normality in the distribution of attachment security and relationship satisfaction by computing the Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 and robust standard errors for our models. The result for ML estimation and robust ML estimation did not differ.

⁷If a path coefficient was not significantly different from zero in one group ($t < 1.96$), but significant in the other group we compared two models to prove that difference in the significance of the parameter was meaningful and not due to different sample sizes between groups. The following strategy was applied: First, we fixed the parameter to zero in both groups. Second, we compared this model to the previous model where no restriction was set. If model fit decreased (increase in χ^2 , increase in RMSEA, decrease in CFI), we assumed that the parameter was not zero for both groups. Third, we fixed the parameter to zero in the group where the insignificant parameter value was obtained. Then the model was compared with the two previous models. If model fit improved as compared to the second model and did not decrease as compared to the first model, it was concluded that the two groups differed significantly in the respective path coefficient.

Table 3. Cross-sectional correlations (t1) between personality and attachment as a function of relationship stability

Concurrent relations	Security		Dependency		Relationship satisfaction	
	Continuers	Changers	Continuers	Changers	Continuers	Changers
Neuroticism	-0.39	-0.39	0.05	0.17	-0.31	-0.23
Extraversion	0.19	0.31	-0.00 _a	-0.30_a	0.12	0.00
Agreeableness	0.29_a	0.47_a	0.44_b	0.02 _b	0.19	0.20
Conscientiousness	0.34	0.31	-0.13 _a	0.13 _a	0.19	0.16

Note: $N = 133$ continuers and $N = 92$ changers ($N = 75^3$ changers for Relationship Satisfaction).

Correlations in boldface are significant ($p < .05$). Correlations in a given row with the same subscript differ significantly between groups, values were obtained from model comparison between restricted (equality constraint) and unrestricted model.

Concurrent relations

Similarities and differences between changers and continuers in the concurrent associations between personality and relationship quality are shown in Table 3. Whereas security was similarly related to neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness in both groups, the relationship between agreeableness and security was significantly stronger in continuers than in changers. In contrast, dependency was differentially related to personality traits in both groups. Whereas the correlation between agreeableness and dependency ($r = 0.44$) was substantial in continuers, it was zero in relationship changers. The reverse pattern was found for extraversion. In changers, higher extraversion was related to lower dependency ($r = -0.30$), whereas a zero relationship was found in continuers. The pattern of relations between relationship satisfaction and personality traits did not differ between continuers and changers.

Personality effects on relationship change

Effects for continuers and changers are shown in Table 4. For reasons of clarity only those path coefficients and correlations are presented that were significantly different from zero ($t > 1.96$). During the first time interval only one personality effect on relationship change (path *b* in Figure 1) was found for continuers and for changers, respectively. In continuers, higher neuroticism predicted a decrease in dependency ($\beta = -0.14$). In contrast, the dependency of relationship changers was not affected by neuroticism, but by conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.23$). Higher initial levels of conscientiousness enabled individuals, whose relationship ended and who began a new one, to develop higher levels of dependency on their new partner. In contrast, feeling dependent in continuous relationships was contingent on the initial level of neuroticism. These findings indicate a differential meaning of dependency in stable versus changing relationships. All in all, personality effects on relationship change were limited to the first time interval.

Relationship effects on personality change

Relationship effects on personality (paths *c* in Figure 1) were rare and only found for continuers. Higher initial levels of dependency predicted a decrease in neuroticism during the first time interval ($\beta = -0.14$) thus reciprocating the neuroticism effect on change in dependency. In addition, higher initial levels of security predicted an increase in

Table 4. Cross-lagged effects and correlated change between personality traits and relationship quality in continuers and changers

			Continuers	Changers
First time interval (T1 → T2)				
Personality Effects ¹				
Neuroticism	→	Dependency	-0.14 (.03)	n.s.
Conscientiousness	→	Dependency	n.s.	0.23 (.05)
Relationship Effects ¹				
Dependency	→	Neuroticism	-0.14 (.02)	n.s.
Security	→	Conscientiousness	0.13 (.02)	n.s.
Correlated Change ²				
Security	↔	Neuroticism	-0.26	n.s.
	↔	Conscientiousness	0.29	n.s.
	↔	Agreeableness	0.25	n.s.
Dependency	↔	Agreeableness	n.s.	0.25
Relationship Satisfaction	↔	Neuroticism	-0.15	n.s.
	↔	Agreeableness	0.12	0.34
Second time interval (T2 → T3)				
Correlated Change ²				
Security	↔	Neuroticism	-0.14	-0.22
Relationship satisfaction	↔	Neuroticism	-0.13	-0.23

Note: $N = 133$ changers, $N = 92$ ($N = 75$ for relationship satisfaction³) continuers.

¹Cross-lagged effects are represented by path coefficients (standardized β s) and ΔR^2 change (in parentheses).

²Correlated change is indicated by Pearson correlations.

All reported effects are significant at $p < 0.05$

conscientiousness during the first time interval ($\beta = 0.13$; see Table 4). Hence, differential personality maturation seems to be influenced by attachment only in stable relationships.

Correlated change

Correlated change (double-headed arrow d in Figure 1) yielded a diverse pattern of results for both groups (see Table 4). In continuers, change in security and change in neuroticism went hand in hand during the first ($r = -0.26$) and the second time interval ($r = -0.14$), reflecting that those who increased in security decreased in neuroticism. The same effect was found for relationship changers during the second time interval ($r = -0.22$). Change in relationship satisfaction was in the same way related to change in neuroticism: Decreasing neuroticism was related to increasing relationship satisfaction during the first ($r = -0.15$) as well as during the second time interval ($r = -0.13$) in continuers. Again, the same effect was found in relationship changers ($r = -0.23$), but only during the second time interval. Change in relationship satisfaction was also related to change in agreeableness for both groups during the first time interval, but this relationship was stronger for relationship changers ($r = 0.34$) than for continuers ($r = 0.12$).

Additionally to the homogeneous pattern described above, there were two other notable differences between continuers and changers. First, the continuers showed a more comprehensive pattern of correlated change. Increasing attachment security was not only related to decreasing neuroticism, but also related to increasing conscientiousness ($r = 0.29$) and increasing agreeableness ($r = 0.25$). Second, change in dependency was generally unrelated to personality change with one exception. An increase in dependency during the first time interval was related to change in agreeableness for relationship

changers ($r = 0.25$). All in all, the patterns of correlated change reflect that differential personality development was associated with increasing relationship quality, and that this association was more consistent in continuers than in changers.

DISCUSSION

We investigated dynamic transactions between personality and relationship experiences in young adults over a period of 8 years. Our research highlights the effects of stability and change in the social environment on personality and relationship development. Whereas relationship continuers changed more in terms of personality maturation, relationship changers showed a more diverse pattern of change, especially regarding neuroticism. This pattern of differential stability perpetuated into distinct features of transaction between personality and relationship development. In general, a more consistent and complete pattern of reciprocal influence was observed for continuers rather than for changers. Our findings suggest that young adults' personality development in terms of growth and maturation is more likely to unfold in a stable social environment, of which a continuous partner relationship is an important part.

Before we proceed with the discussion, we will address some caveats that need to be considered. First, we studied romantic relationships from the perceptions of one partner only. A dyadic approach (e.g., Neyer & Voigt, 2004; Robins, Caspi, & Moffit, 2000) would take both partners' experiences and perceptions into account. Future studies with dyadic designs will add to our understanding of the dynamics between relationship experiences and personality. Second, we did not analyze separate models for men and women because of our sample size. However, we did not observe large gender differences in any variable and controlled for possible effects of gender. Analyzing gender specific models in future studies would shed light on possible gender differences. Third, we relied on self-report methods. Although other data sources would complete the picture and avoid the problem of shared method variance, research has shown that relationships between personality and relationship quality are not greatly biased by shared method variance (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Donnellan, Larsen-Rife, & Conger, 2005; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). Fourth, our sample was not fully representative. Even though we did not observe any differences in education between our groups, the differential attrition due to educational status needs to be considered by future studies. Fifth, our study used a quasi-experimental design which implies limits regarding causal interpretation of results. Nevertheless, the longitudinal design, the application of path analysis, and controlling for selection effects are means to address this issue in settings where randomized allocation of participants was impossible.

The following discussion is organized according to the three research questions regarding the predictors of long-term relationships across emerging adulthood, the stability and change of personality and relationship experiences, and the dynamic transactions between personality and relationships.

What predicts relationship continuation?

Whether a relationship was continued or not could be predicted from how satisfied a person was with his or her relationship. In contrast to research on marital stability (e.g. Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kelly & Conley, 1987), neuroticism was not a predictor of relationship

stability. Being unsatisfied with a romantic relationship rather than being neurotic in young adulthood led to separation. This result is in line with other findings (e.g. Robins et al., 2002), suggesting that the features of the specific relationship are more important for the continuation of a relationship than personality traits. The role of dependency is less clear for continuation because it was confounded with the duration of the relationship. However, a trend was visible, revealing the importance of dependency on the partner: Being dependable rather than being dependent seemed to be a protective factor for relationship continuation.

How stable are personality traits and relationship quality in changing relationship environments?

We studied three aspects of stability of personality and relationship quality under different environmental conditions. First, we describe differential patterns of mean level stability for continuers and changers. Second, we discuss the effect of environmental stability on rank-order stability. Third, we address the domain specificity of stability regarding personality and relationship quality.

In terms of mean level change, the continuers and changers differed remarkably with regard to the change in agreeableness and relationship satisfaction. Whereas continuers followed the normative pattern of increasing agreeableness, changers did not change at all. Srivastava and colleagues (2003) assumed that agreeableness should increase as a result of the transition to parenthood. However, there is not much evidence supporting this view. Instead, our study showed that normative change in agreeableness seems to be more related to stable, continuing relationship experiences in partnerships. This result provides some support for the prediction of the socioemotional-selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1992). According to this theory, agreeableness should increase in middle and old age because adults become more selective and more interested in the maintenance of close relationships. Our findings suggest that this development might even start in young adulthood because romantic relationships require commitment and making compromises. The demands of enduring partnerships may generalize and become apparent in a global increase in agreeableness.

Based on past research we expected a slight decline of relationship satisfaction in the group of continuers (e.g. Kurdek, 1999). Relationship changers on the other hand were expected to increase in relationship satisfaction (Robins et al., 2002). We could generally confirm these expectations. However, the decline in continuers was small whereas the increase in relationship changers was larger. With this finding we complement the literature on marital stability. We showed that the slight decline of relationship satisfaction is not restricted to married couples but rather a general effect in long-term couples.

Besides mean-level stability, the two groups differed remarkably in rank-order stability. This finding indicates more diverse patterns of change in a changing social environment. Ending a relationship and entering into a new one might have different implications for different individuals. Some may find it relieving to leave a partnership, whereas others may find it frightening to leave or be left by their partner resulting in decreasing or increasing neuroticism. Individual differences in the development of neuroticism converge with other studies showing that neuroticism is the personality trait which is most susceptible to environmental conditions (e.g., Shiner, Masten, & Tellegen, 2002; Watson & Casillas, 2003).

The notion of the relationship-specificity of attachment (Asendorpf et al., 1997) is supported by the higher levels of rank-order stability of attachment in continuers. With our study, we can add longitudinal evidence that attachment styles do not generalize across different relationship types or relationship partners. Clearly, different relationship partners affect the attachment quality in a different manner.

Dynamic transactions between personality and relationship experiences

Stability and change of personality traits and relationship qualities as described above are prerequisites and consequences of dynamic transactions between a person and his/her relationship experiences. In the following we discuss these transactions as expressed in concurrent correlations, cross-lagged effects and correlated change.

Concurrent relations between personality and relationship quality

Concurrent correlations reflect the result of all associations and transactions between personality traits and relationship experiences that occurred prior to the first assessment of these variables. It is important to keep in mind that selection effects as well as reciprocal influences are hopelessly confounded in cross-sectional correlations. Thus, concurrent correlations need to be interpreted with caution. Yet, from an individual difference perspective, it is remarkable that continuers and changers differed in the initial interrelations between personality and relationships. The strongest differences between the two groups were found for dependency whereas the correlational pattern for security was quite similar. This pattern points to the differential meaning of dependency in continuers and changers. In instable relationships, extraverted individuals seemed to be more independent from their partner possibly because they were more interested in meeting other people including potential partners. In stable relationships on the other hand, more agreeable individuals were more dependent on their partner. Or to put it differently, being dependent on the partner in a stable relationship was associated with avoiding arguments or fights, and being disposed to accommodate partners' wishes (Caspi et al., 2005).

For relationship satisfaction we did not find differential patterns. Emotionally stable, agreeable individuals seemed to be more satisfied with their relationship in general and might therefore have less negative interactions with their partner and view their relationship in a more positive light (Donnellan, Conger, & Bryant, 2004).

Cross-lagged effects

We found one complete pattern of personality-relationship transactions in continuers, but not in changers. In changers, we only observed one personality effect on relationship change, whereas in continuers both personality as well as relationship effects occurred. This general pattern confirmed our assumptions based on the interactional continuity principle and the enduring relationships model. More securely attached individuals in stable relationships for example, increased in conscientiousness, they became more reliable, responsible, self-controlled, and task- and goal-oriented (Roberts et al., 2003). Being in a relationship where the partner is regarded as the secure base may give life a structure that helps to select goals and to focus on these goals.

In addition, reciprocal influences were found for neuroticism and dependency. Similar to the effect of the first stable romantic relationship on neuroticism (Neyer & Asendorpf, 2001; Neyer & Lehnart, in press), dependency in long-term relationships fortify the stabilizing effect of stable interaction patterns as assumed by the enduring dynamics

model. Higher neuroticism on the other hand may reflect lower thresholds for experiencing distressing negative emotions, even after trivial disagreements or conflicts that happen regularly during daily interactions (Donnellan et al., 2005, Karney & Bradbury, 1995). This way personality may affect enduring relationship patterns which in turn might influence decreasing dependency on the partner.

In contrast to the dynamics observed in continuers, only one personality effect on relationship development and no relationship effect on personality development were found in changers. This finding is in line with the assumption that individuals tend to reshape and reorganize their instable social environment in accordance with their personality traits. The effect of conscientiousness on dependency seems to reflect the increase of commitment in the new relationship. A different interpretation could suggest that conscientious individuals were more likely to find or select a new relationship partner towards whom they more easily develop increasing dependency. Although we used a strict methodology to study the dynamics, future studies are needed to shed light on the underlying causalities.

No effects of relationship quality on personality change were found in the context of relationship change. This finding is in accordance with our assumptions based on the interactional continuity principle. We did not expect relationship experiences made with a former partner to influence later personality change we rather expected that new relationships were directly influenced by enduring personality traits. However, possible effects of the new relationship due to the stabilization of the new interaction pattern between measurement occasions cannot be ruled out and are most likely to appear as correlated change.

Correlated change

Most dynamic transactions occurred in terms of correlated change. The three measurement occasions were chosen arbitrarily, thus, the likelihood of detecting direct influences of personality traits on change in relationships or *vice versa* was diminished because we might have missed the occurrence of an effect. Moreover, the lag between the two measurement occasions was large which also reduces the likelihood to detect direct effects. Correlated change comprises of all these undetected dynamic transactions and can therefore be regarded as the expression of reciprocal influences or developmental processes that happened between measurement occasions. In accordance with our assumptions, we expected more correlated change in continuers than in changers because reciprocal transactions are assumed to more likely occur in stable relationship environments. However, we did not expect these effects to be observed in continuers only. Rather establishing a stable interaction pattern with the new partner after a relationship break-up may elicit congruent patterns of change in relationship quality and personality traits in changers.

The expected overall pattern was confirmed. Under the condition of a stable environment—as reflected by an ongoing relationship—personality maturation was markedly associated with increasing attachment security. A similar pattern occurred for relationship satisfaction, since increasing satisfaction with the romantic relationship came along with becoming more agreeable and emotionally stable. In changers, only change in agreeableness was associated with changes in relationship quality.

During the second time interval, personality maturation in terms of becoming emotionally stable was continuously associated with the development of relationship quality. Moreover, not only was the pattern replicated for continuers over subsequent time intervals, changers also showed the same pattern of correlated change during the second time interval. This finding indicates that indeed neuroticism is the trait that is most strongly related to relationship experiences (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Robins et al., 2002; Watson

& Casillas, 2003). Furthermore, it shows that the system of dynamic transactions needs some time after a disruption (partner change) to be rearranged. The fading out of personality-relationship transactions supports the cumulative continuity principle and the enduring dynamics model of relationship development. Dynamic transactions need time to emerge but in the end they lead to a stabilization of the dynamic system.

CONCLUSION

Finding a partner and obtaining a satisfying and stable relationship is an important goal for many people (Roberts & Robins, 2000). Our study has three implications on the association of partner relationships and personality development. First, we showed that personality-relationship transactions are more likely to occur in stable social environments. Personality development in the context of partner relationships was not limited to neuroticism or negative emotionality, but occurred also in other traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness. Second, our findings complement the literature on adult attachment by providing evidence for the importance of attachment in romantic relationships in young adulthood and by showing that partner attachment is relationship specific rather than a stable personality trait. Third, we have shown that the development of adult attachment is substantially related to personality development as well as to the continuity and discontinuity of relationships. Personality development does not occur independently of environmental influences. On the contrary, stability and change of relationships establish environmental contexts that diversify personality-relationship transactions.

In the introduction we asked the question 'Should I stay or should I go?' From our results we can give no definite answer. But we can conclude that a relationship break-up has no detrimental effects on personality and that satisfaction and dependency can increase with the emergence of a new romantic relationship. In addition, we have evidence that stable romantic relationships create an environment that provides individuals with the opportunity to shape the relationship in line with their personality, which at the same time becomes molded and changed in a relationship specific manner. Thus, stable relationships are a context of personality development. Our results emphasize the creative power and adaptability of personality during emerging adulthood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by the Max-Planck Institut für Psychologische Forschung, the Deutsches Jugendinstitut, and by grants from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (NE 633/1-1,2; NE 633/2-1; NE 633/2-2). Sampling and surveys were carried out by Infratest Sozialforschung. The authors thank Michaela Turß and Cornelia Wrzus for most valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article and Iain Glen for stylistic corrections.

REFERENCES

- Allport, G. W. (1961). *Pattern and growth in personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
 Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469–480.

- Asendorpf, J. B., Banse, R., Wilpers, S., & Neyer, F. J. (1997). Beziehungsspezifische Bindungsskalen für Erwachsene und ihre Validierung durch Netzwerk- und Tagebuchverfahren [Relationship specific attachment scales for adults and their validation through network and diary methods]. *Diagnostica*, *43*, 289–313.
- Asendorpf, J. B., & Wilpers, S. (1998). Personality effects on social relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1531–1544.
- Baldwin, M. W., Keelan, J. P. R., Fehr, B., Enns, V., & Koh-Rangarajoo, E. (1996). Social-cognitive conceptualization of attachment working models: Availability and accessibility effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *71*, 94–109.
- Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *7*, 147–178.
- Borkenau, P., & Ostendorf, F. (1993). *NEO-Fünf-Faktoren Inventar nach Costa und McCrae-Deutsche Fassung* [Neo five factor inventory (Costa, P. T. & McCrae, R. R., 1985)- German version]. Göttingen: Hogrefe Testzentrale.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss: Attachment* (Vol. 1 2nd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview. In J. A. Simpson, & W. S. Rholes (Eds.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46–76). New York: Guilford Press.
- Carstensen, L. L. (1992). Social and emotional patterns in adulthood: Support for the socioemotional selectivity theory. *Psychology and Aging*, *7*, 331–338.
- Caspi, A., Bem, D. J., & Elder, G. H. (1989). Continuities and consequences of interactional styles across the life course. *Journal of Personality*, *57*, 375–406.
- Caspi, A., & Roberts, B. W. (2001). Personality development across the life course: The argument for change and continuity. *Psychological Inquiry*, *12*, 49–66.
- Caspi, A., Roberts, B. W., & Shiner, R. (2005). Personality development: Stability and change. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *56*, 453–484.
- Caughlin, J. P., Huston, T. L., & Houts, R. N. (2000). How does personality matter in marriage?: An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 326–336.
- Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *58*, 644–663.
- Cooper, M. L. (2002). Personality and close relationships: Embedding people in important social contexts. *Journal of Personality*, *70*, 757–782.
- Donnellan, M. B., Conger, R. D., & Bryant, C. M. (2004). The Big Five and enduring marriages. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *38*, 481–504.
- Donnellan, M. B., Larsen-Rife, D., & Conger, R. D. (2005). Personality, family history, and competence in early adult romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88*, 562–576.
- Elder, G. H., & Shanahan, M. J. (2006). The life course and human development. In W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Feeney, J., & Noller, P. (1996). *Adult attachment*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Fraley, C. R., & Roberts, B. W. (2005). Patterns of continuity: A dynamic model for conceptualizing the stability of individual differences in psychological constructs across the life course. *Psychological Review*, *112*, 60–74.
- Fraley, C. R., & Shaver, P. R. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of General Psychology*, *4*, 132–154.
- Furman, W. (2002). The emerging field of adolescent romantic relationships. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *11*, 177–180.
- Furman, W., Simon, V. A., Shaffer, L., & Bouchey, H. A. (2002). Adolescent's working models and styles for relationships with parents, friends, and romantic partners. *Child Development*, *73*, 241–255.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 511–524.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1990). Love and work: An attachment—theoretical perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *59*, 270–280.

- Helson, R., Jones, C., & Kwan, V. S. Y. (2002). Personality change over 40 years of adulthood: Hierarchical linear modeling analyses of two longitudinal samples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 752–766.
- Kachadourian, L. K., Fincham, F., & Davila, J. (2004). The tendency to forgive in dating and married couples: The role of attachment and relationship satisfaction. *Personal Relationships*, *11*, 373–391.
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, methods, and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *118*, 3–34.
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1997). Neuroticism, marital interaction, and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*, 1075–1092.
- Kelly, E. L., & Conley, J. J. (1987). Personality and compatibility: A prospective analysis of marital stability and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 27–40.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1993). Predicting marital dissolution: A 5-year prospective longitudinal study of newlywed couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 221–242.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1999). The nature and predictors of the trajectory of change in marital quality for husbands and wives over the first 10 years of marriage. *Developmental Psychology*, *35*, 1283–1296.
- McCrae, R. R., Costa, P. T., Jr., Lima, M. P., Simoes, A., Ostendorf, F., Angleitner, A., Marusic, I., Bratko, D., Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Chae, J. H., & Piedmont, R. L. (1999). Age differences in personality across the adult life span: Parallels in five cultures. *Developmental Psychology*, *35*, 466–477.
- McCrae, R. R., Costa, P. T., Jr., Ostendorf, F., Angleitner, A., Hrebickova, M., Avia, M. D., Sanz, J., Sanchez-Bernardoz, M. L., Kusdul, M. E., Woodfield, R., Saunders, P. R., & Smith, P. B. (2000). Nature over nurture: Temperament, personality, and life span development. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 173–186.
- Mroczek, D. K., & Spiro, A. (2003). Modeling intraindividual change in personality traits: Findings from the Normative Aging Study. *Journals of Gerontology: Series B: Psychological Sciences & Social Sciences*, *58*, 153–165.
- Neyer, F. J. (1999). Die Persönlichkeit junger Erwachsener in verschiedenen Lebensformen [Personality of young adults in different life patterns]. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, *51*, 491–508.
- Neyer, F. J. (2002). The dyadic interdependence of attachment security and dependency: A conceptual replication across older twin pairs and young couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *19*, 483–503.
- Neyer, F. J., & Asendorpf, J. B. (2001). Personality-relationship transaction in young adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *81*, 1190–1204.
- Neyer, F. J., & Lehnart, J. (2006). Personality, relationships, and health—a dynamic-transactional perspective. In M. Vollrath (Ed.), *Handbook of personality and health*. New York: Wiley.
- Neyer, F. J., & Lehnart, J. (in press). Relationships matter in personality development: Evidence from an 8-year longitudinal study across young adulthood. *Journal of personality*.
- Neyer, F. J., & Voigt, D. (2004). Personality and social network effects on romantic relationships: A dyadic approach. *European Journal of Personality*, *18*, 279–299.
- Reinecke, J. (2005). *Strukturgleichungsmodelle in den Sozialwissenschaften* [Structural Equation Modeling for the Social Sciences]. München: Oldenbourg.
- Roberts, B. W., & Bogg, T. (2004). A longitudinal study of the relationships between conscientiousness and the social-environmental factors and substance-use behavior that influence health. *Journal of Personality*, *72*, 325–353.
- Roberts, B. W., & Caspi, A. (2003). The cumulative continuity model of personality development: Striking a balance between continuity and change in personality traits across the life course. In U. M. Staudinger, & U. Lindenberger (Eds.), *Understanding human development: Dialogues with lifespan psychology* (pp. 183–214). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Roberts, B. W., & Chapman, C. (2000). Change in dispositional well-being and its relation to role quality: A 30-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *34*, 26–41.
- Roberts, B. W., & DelVecchio, W. F. (2000). The rank-order consistency of personality traits from childhood to old age: A quantitative review of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, *126*, 3–25.
- Roberts, B. W., Helson, R., & Klohnen, E. C. (2002). Personality development and growth in women across 30 years: Three perspectives. *Journal of Personality*, *70*, 79–102.

- Roberts, B. W., & Robins, R. W. (2000). Broad dispositions, broad aspirations: The intersection of the Big Five dimensions and major life goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*, 1284–1296.
- Roberts, B. W., & Robins, R. W. (2004). Person-environment fit and its implications for personality development: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality*, *72*, 89–110.
- Roberts, B. W., Robins, R. W., Caspi, A., & Trzesniewski, K. (2003). Personality trait development in adulthood. In J. Mortimer, & M. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 579–598). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic.
- Roberts, B. W., Walton, K. E., & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*, 1–25.
- Robins, R. W., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (2000). Two personalities, one relationship: Both partners' personality traits shape the quality of their relationship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *79*, 251–259.
- Robins, R. W., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. (2002). It's not who you're with, it's who you are: Personality and relationship experiences across multiple relationships. *Journal of Personality*, *70*, 925–964.
- Sameroff, A. J. (1983). Models of development and developmental risk. In C. H. Zeanah (Ed.), *Handbook of infant mental health* (pp. 3–13). New York: Guilford Press.
- Sander, J., & Böcker, S. (1993). Die Deutsche Form der Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS): Eine kurze Skala zur Messung der Zufriedenheit in einer Partnerschaft. [The German version of the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS): A short scale for measuring satisfaction in a dyadic relationship]. *Diagnostica*, *39*, 55–62.
- Shiner, R. L., Masten, A. S., & Tellegen, A. (2002). A developmental perspective on personality in emerging adulthood: Childhood antecedents and concurrent adaptation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 1165–1177.
- Srivastava, S., John, O. P., & Gosling, S. D. (2003). Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: Set like plaster or persistent change? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 1041–1053.
- Sümer, N., & Cozzarelli, C. (2004). The impact of adult attachment on partner and self-attributions and relationship quality. *Personal Relationships*, *11*, 355–371.
- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2003). Stability of self-esteem across the life-span. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 205–220.
- Watson, D., & Casillas, A. (2003). Neuroticism: Adaptive and maladaptive features. In E. C. Chang, & L. S. Sanna (Eds.), *Virtue, vice, and personality: The complexity of behavior* (pp. 145–161). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Watson, D., Hubbard, B., & Wiese, D. (2000). General traits of personality and affectivity as predictors of satisfaction in intimate relationships: Evidence from self- and partner-ratings. *Journal of Personality*, *68*, 413–449.

Copyright of European Journal of Personality is the property of John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 1996 and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.