



# From Vicious To Virtuous Circle: How partners’ dynamics change throughout therapy

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## INTRODUCTION

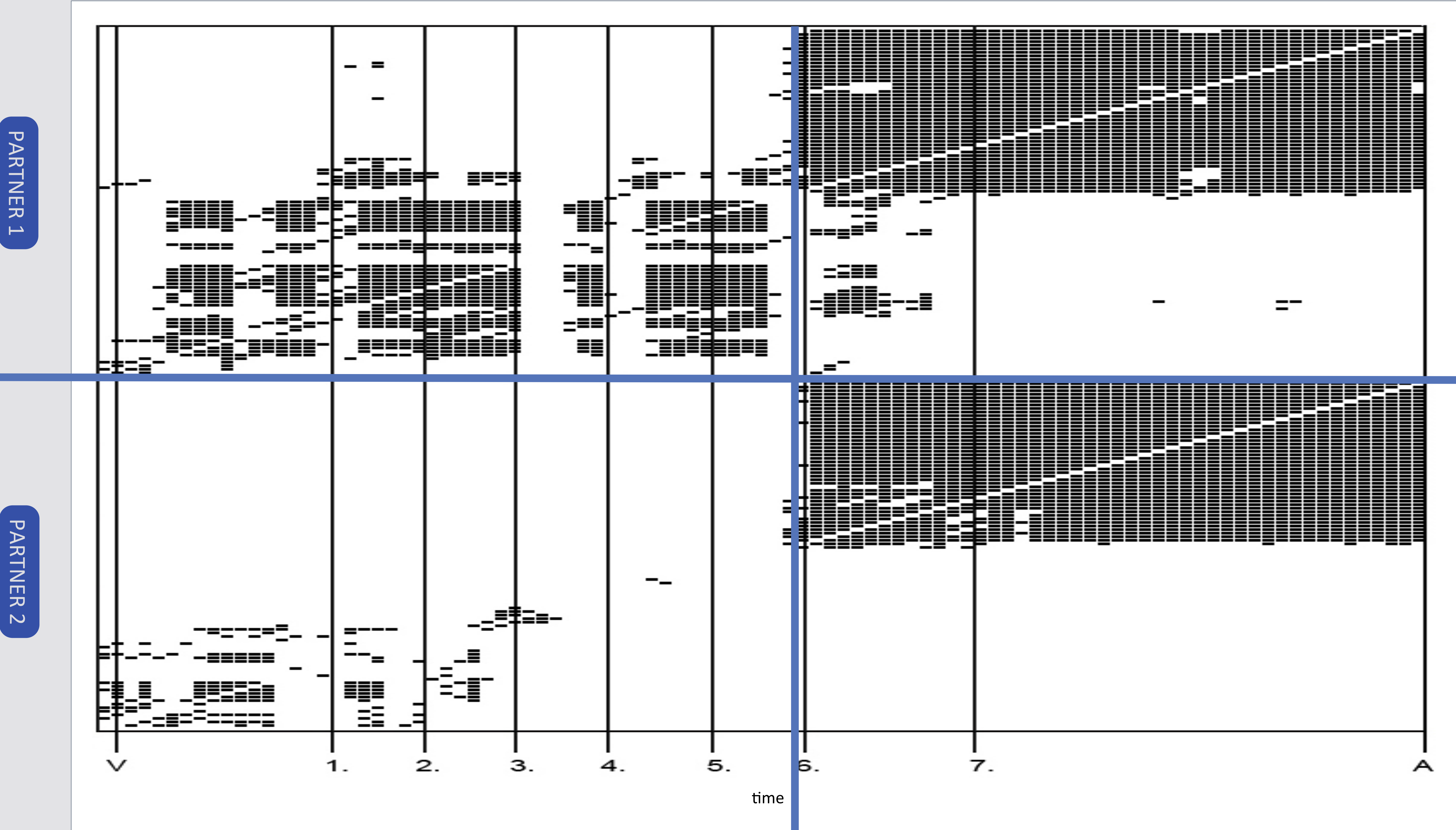
The synergetic theory proposes change as order-order-transitions. We interpret those changes as **second-order-change** (Ulrich, 2012). In this study we examine how the dynamics between both partners differ before and after the transition. Helpful theory regarding the dyadic interaction is provided by Gottman, Murray, Swanson, Tyson & Swanson (2002).

## METHOD

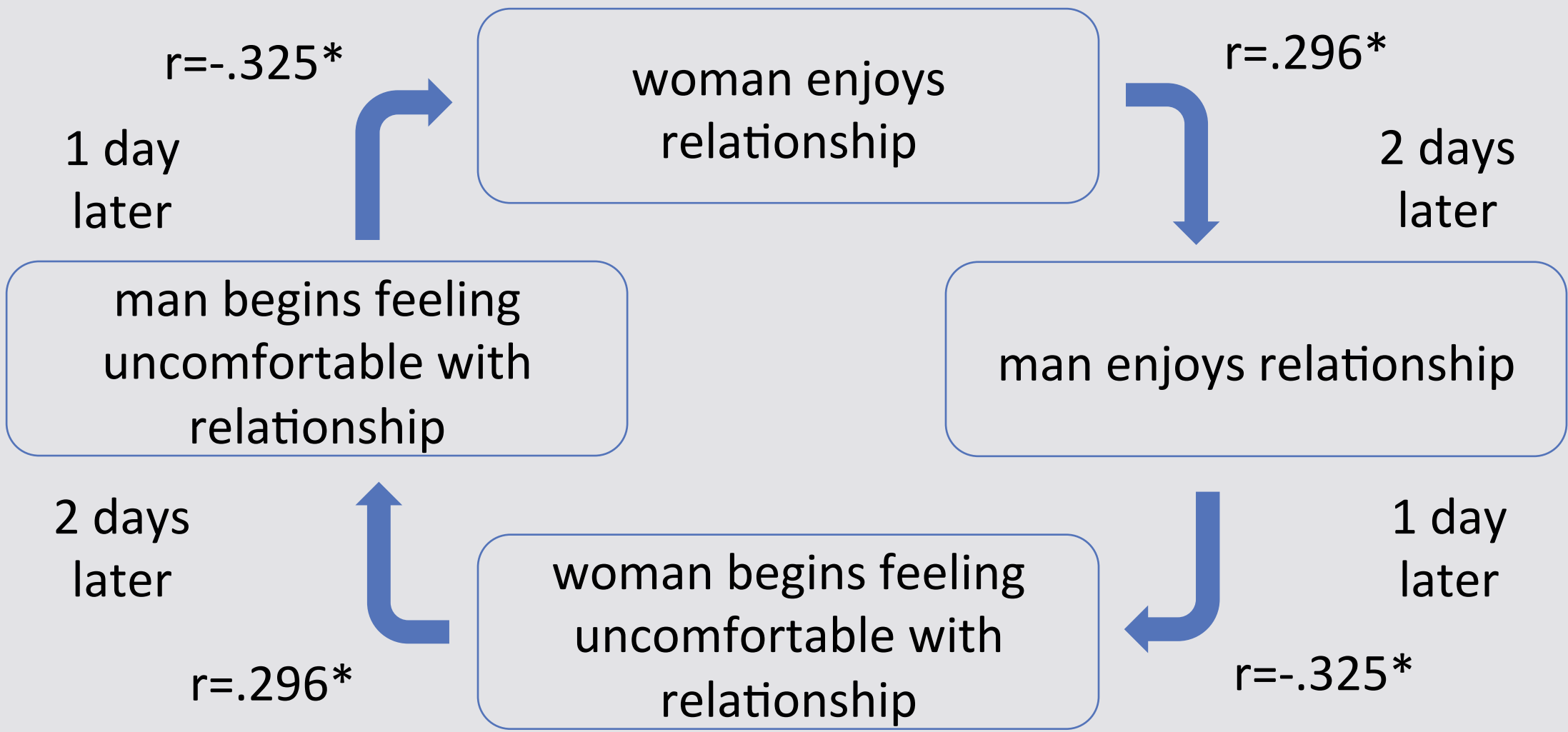
In the current study daily measures of one couple (“couple 2”) were analyzed by means of an online-questionnaire (SNS). On the basis of **recurrence plots**, the order-order-transition was identified visually. Then bivariate correlation analyses were used to compare the **interaction** between both partners during the first phase of transition with the one in the second phase. For the measurement of the dynamics **positive emotions** were used.

## RESULTS

Recurrence Plot shows order-order-transition: Abrupt shift into a new attractor after 6<sup>th</sup> session from both partners

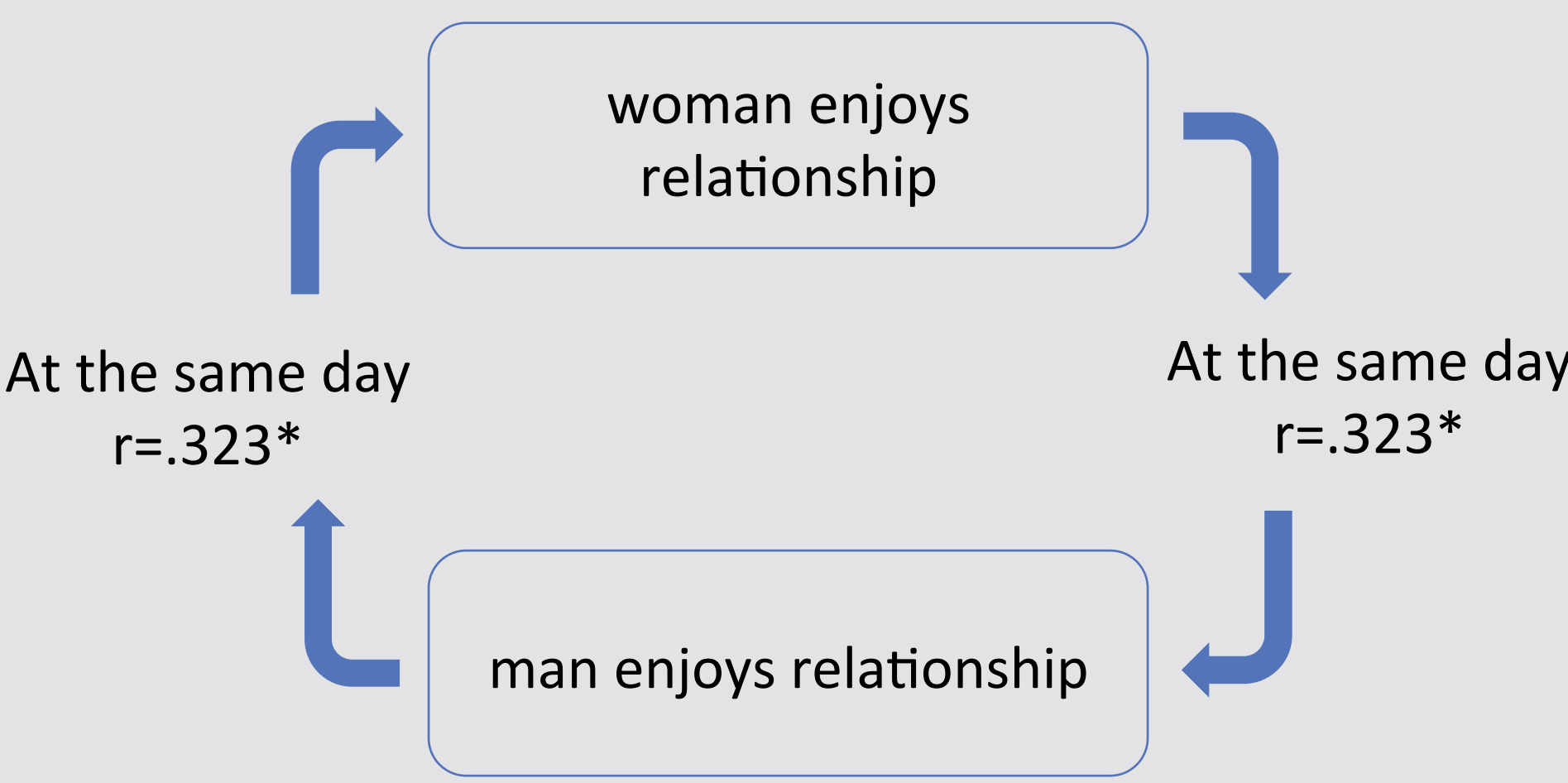


Phase before order-order-transition: bivariate correlations show how both partners’ emotions interact



“Vicious circle” between both partners

Phase after order-order-transition: bivariate correlations show how the interaction between both partners has changed



“Virtuous circle” between both partners

## DISCUSSION

Detailed analysis of “couple 2” showed an abrupt order-order-transition after the 6th session for both partners at individual and **dyadic level**: During the first stage of therapy, the woman withdrew when her partner’s well-being grew; as a result her partner felt uncomfortable, too. Therefore both partners were unsatisfied with their

relationship. In the second phase dyadic interaction changed from a “**vicious circle**” into a “**virtuous circle**” of reciprocal support and affirmation as described by Gottman et al. (2002): both partners affect each other with positive feelings. Thus this transition could be interpreted as **second-order-change**.

## REFERENCES

Gottman, J. M., Murray, J. D., Swanson, C. C., Tyson, R. & Swanson, K. R. (2002). *The Mathematics of Marriage. Dynamic Nonlinear Models*. Cambridge, MS: MIT Press.  
Ulrich, Cornelia (2012). *Paartherapie-Prozessforschung. Entwicklung und Anwendung einer innovativen Forschungsstrategie*. Hamburg: Dr. Kovač Verlag.