

UNITED WISDOM

Repeated partner choice: which explanations are worth checking

Relationships

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Epigraph

> *“Test all things.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:21, World English Bible. Christian communal discernment; no permission to manufacture partner tests, provoke danger or continue unwanted contact.*

What this article is about

After several relationships, we sometimes feel that a similar person has appeared beside us again. Different appearance and biography, yet a familiar experience returns: I am drawn in, I have to wait, important things are difficult to agree on. We want one explanation connecting everything and showing how to avoid repeating a mistake. But saying that I choose the same people does not yet tell us what is similar, how many cases are comparable or when the resemblance appeared. It may join initial interest, meeting circumstances, later actions and today's view of the past. Examining that combination is more useful than immediately assigning ourselves a stable type or one cause of our whole personal history.

This article considers what has repeated and several possible explanations, without turning them into a diagnosis or compulsory path to change. Preferences, available encounters, practical conditions, both people's actions and remembered descriptions play different roles. Considering one's own choices does not transfer responsibility for another person's violence, deception or coercion. There is no need to contact an ex-partner, collect private information about them or begin a new relationship to test a hypothesis. Sometimes the available material supports only a small present decision. A cause can remain unknown while an important condition is named, an unsafe contact ends or appropriate support is sought.

Imagine a fictional scene. Polina remembers two acquaintances made at photography workshops. Both people attracted her through animated conversation and confident invitations to take a walk together. Later, in both cases, arranging time for regular meetings proved difficult. Polina thinks she has chosen an unavailable person again. This is no actual client history or established pattern. The scene contains two cases, a similar meeting setting, an attractive conversational manner and a later scheduling difficulty. We do not yet know whether that difficulty had the same causes, what was promised or how Polina understood the desired regularity in each case. These questions offer a beginning without a ready verdict on herself or others.

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I. Name what actually repeated

Polina could begin by replacing the general label with specific descriptions. Both people spoke confidently; both proposed a walk; with both, she later could not agree on the frequency of meetings she wanted. These are three different observations. The first concerns manner, the second an early action and the third subsequent participation. Their proximity does not establish that confidence causes unavailability or that every attractive conversational partner will act similarly. Resemblance can remain where it was noticed, without expanding into a complete personality portrait. The question then has distinguishable parts: what attracted me, what happened later and where the conditions stopped fitting me.

A repeated feeling deserves attention too, but is not identical to repeated behaviour by another person. Waiting might follow a cancelled agreement, a reply explaining limited time or one's own hope for more frequent contact. In each case the feeling can be unpleasant, while the events differ. A broken promise should not dissolve into a discussion of subjective perception. If meeting frequency was never discussed, it cannot retrospectively become an agreement. Distinguishing these things does not require declaring anyone entirely right. It preserves actual grounds for discomfort without replacing them with one familiar emotional label or requiring the abandonment of one's wishes.

Two similar cases supply no frequency for an entire life. Even with more cases, it matters which ones are included, forgotten or excluded. Personal reflection need not become a statistical investigation. It is enough to state honestly the scope of available material: I remember two histories, see this shared detail in them and am not considering other data now. The word always may express exhaustion, but needs greater support as a factual claim. It can be replaced without diminishing pain. A bounded description leaves room for exceptions, unknowns and a decision concerning today rather than an unchanging law about oneself.

II. Recognition can begin with a small detail

In part III, proposition XVI of the Ethics, Spinoza considers how perceived resemblance to an object of earlier pleasure or pain can participate in a present attitude. This is philosophical reasoning about affects, not an empirical model of partner choice. It offers an angle on a question: which detail seemed familiar, and which earlier experience did I connect it with? For Polina, the detail might be a confident conversational opening. Similar manner does not establish identical character, readiness for relationships or causes of later events. The comparison helps notice a transition from detail to expectation, without declaring that transition the established mechanism of an entire history.

The familiar may appeal for understandable reasons. Polina enjoys discussing photography, appreciates clear invitations and feels interested in someone who also wants to walk with a

camera. These preferences do not become mistakes simply because a difficulty appeared later. A separate question concerns what she expected from the attractive detail. A confident invitation to one walk might have been interpreted as readiness to make time regularly. That connection is possible in our fictional scene, but still needs checking against available material. It cannot establish hidden trauma, a parental script or an inability to choose. A person can retain what they like while clarifying the limits of the conclusions drawn from it.

An unfamiliar manner does not guarantee a different outcome either. Deliberately choosing a quiet person would not by itself reveal their available time, respect for agreements or interest in a relationship. The opposite of one feature is not the opposite of an entire history. A new acquaintance need not become a compulsory experiment on oneself or another person. Attention to participation conditions can broaden without requiring the abandonment of a familiar conversational style. The question is which information actually concerns an important condition, rather than how unlike previous partners someone appears. Not every recurring attraction needs correction, and not every difference helps answer the chosen question.

III. What the similarity study allows us to say

In their 2019 study, Yoobin Park and Geoff MacDonald examined data from a nine-year longitudinal study in Germany. Comparisons between previous and current partners used the partners' own personality self-reports. The authors distinguished resemblance attributable to an average person's profile, resemblance to the study participant and more specific resemblance between that participant's partners. The official abstract reports significant distinctive similarity. This gives grounds for avoiding the assumption that every impression of similar partners must be imaginary. Yet similarity between particular personality profiles in a study and an explanation of Polina's choices have different scopes. Her two cases do not become measurements of those characteristics simply because she uses the word type.

For this article, the official abstract and bibliographic information were read, rather than the full paper, detailed methods or data. Consequently, there is no account of an unverified procedure, individual forecast or numerical probability of repetition. The abstract itself includes a qualification: some individual-difference associations were not reproduced by an alternative analytic approach. It establishes no inevitable choice, particular childhood cause or effectiveness of the private writing form below. A scientific name need not strengthen a personal verdict. The research can keep a question open: resemblance is sometimes observed, while its description, explanation and significance for an individual decision require their own material.

It is also important to keep the study's subject steady throughout the discussion. Similar personality self-reports do not mean similar relationship circumstances, harmful acts, schedules or promises. Polina might notice a recurring scheduling difficulty, while the research

concerns a different level. Connecting these levels is possible only as an editorial question, not as the authors' conclusion about her life. A study need not explain every detail to provide a useful orientation. Its usefulness here is bounded by the possibility of distinctive resemblance and the need to define what is being compared. Particular histories, participants' responsibilities and Polina's right to choose suitable conditions remain outside that scope.

IV. The circle of encounters is a separate hypothesis

Both fictional acquaintances began at photography workshops. That circumstance can be considered separately from personality preference. People attending such gatherings already share some interest and an ability to attend at particular times. Available encounters are no random sample of all possible partners. Still, this does not establish that workshops create unavailability or that changing settings must solve the difficulty. The proposed connection needs naming: perhaps I often meet people with similarly organised time; perhaps conversation simply begins more easily around a familiar subject. Both remain hypotheses until relevant material supports them. A shared setting is an observation, while its role in the later difficulty is another question.

A similar setting may make a particular feature more visible. Confident conversation about photography is immediately relevant at a workshop, while long-term intentions may never come up. Polina evaluates what is available at the encounter. This is no accusation of superficiality: every contact begins with limited information. The question is whether a visible feature replaces a condition that has not yet been discussed. Distinguishing setting and expectation can clarify a next step within an already familiar circle. There is no need to broaden acquaintances at any cost, enter unwanted contact or expose oneself to risk for the sake of more diverse material.

If Polina wishes to meet people elsewhere, that is a voluntary choice rather than a prescribed cure for repetition. Important conditions may remain unknown there too. A changed setting can alter available encounters, but does not itself validate a hypothesis about the past. A modest purpose is possible: seeing another way of interacting or supporting an interest outside the old circle. The purpose need not involve urgently finding an opposite partner. Keeping an existing interest is equally permissible. Photography need not be abandoned to prove readiness for change. Checking an explanation should fit the question and respect the right not to make personal life a continuous data collection project.

V. When did I learn what mattered?

A repetition may concern the order in which information appeared. Polina first enjoyed conversation, then imagined regular meetings and only later learned about available time. If that happened in both histories, she can consider the moment of agreement. This describes a sequence rather than proving a cause of failure. An earlier question guarantees neither a suitable reply, another person's honesty nor the absence of later changes. Yet it may be an available action in a subsequent particular situation. A desired format can be discussed when it becomes important, without demanding a complete life schedule in advance or making early contact an interrogation about a shared future.

It helps to distinguish information available then from details that seem obvious only now. After a relationship ends, a detail can acquire new significance. Today's interpretation need not become knowledge Polina already possessed at the time. She might have heard about limited time without knowing its duration, taken one invitation literally or hoped for development. Each possibility has its own status. If precise memory is unavailable, that can be recorded. Reconstruction does not require writing a confident scenario over an unknown. For today's decision, it may suffice to identify an important question previously left open, without claiming everything was foreseeable and therefore entirely preventable.

A condition of one's own can be named without finding someone to blame in every episode. Polina might need regular opportunities to arrange meetings, while the offered availability is insufficient. That difference matters even with mutual attraction and good intentions. A clear agreement, if one existed, and its breach require separate consideration. Clarifying one's condition does not erase another person's responsibility. Nor does it promise protection from every future disappointment. People choose using available information, which sometimes changes. A small reflection aims to clarify today's question, rather than establish the possibility of error-free choice or explain the entire history through one participant's insufficient attention.

VI. Check an explanation rather than confirm a label

Once a label of unavailable partners appears, every cancelled meeting may look like confirmation. But a confirming example does not yet distinguish possible explanations. A schedule might have changed, regularity might never have been agreed, a promise might have been broken or the person might no longer wish to continue. These events differ, as do their consequences. One can ask which available fact supports this particular explanation and which would require revising it. If no possible answer can alter the label, it stops helping inquiry. An opposite account need not immediately be invented; restoring the possibility of revision where information remains incomplete is enough.

An exception should be considered using the same feature as the main example. A person with a confident manner who regularly made time bears on the proposed link between manner and availability. A pleasant conversation with someone with whom no relationship occurred has a different scope. Every exception need not become a final refutation, nor every difference an irrelevant detail. First define what is being compared. A small number of personal histories rarely selects one exclusive cause. It may help create a more precise question rather than deliver a definitive scientific conclusion. Counting without clear categories can lend confidence to material that has not yet become comparable.

Checking requires no access to private messages, inquiries among acquaintances without consent or manufactured jealousy. Such actions change the situation, cross boundaries and do not transform a guess into reliable knowledge. Available voluntarily shared material and one's memories, with their limits identified, suffice. Another person's refusal to answer matters for a present choice, but does not establish every proposed hidden cause. One may decide that the available conditions are insufficient while leaving the motive unknown. A personal boundary does not require uncovering all another person's circumstances. If contact is unsafe, protection and competent help take priority over completing a comparison for intellectual clarity.

VII. One's contribution and another person's responsibility

Reflection about choice can readily become self-accusation: if things felt bad again, I must have created them. This mixes the ability to choose some actions with control over another person's behaviour. Polina might have hoped, delayed a question or continued longer than she would now prefer. That does not make her the author of someone else's deception, threats or violence. A personal step can be examined without excusing harm or demanding a useful lesson before protection. Responsibility for an action stays with the person who performed it. Repeated unsafe experience establishes no consent to it and does not make help a reward for explaining oneself correctly.

Participants should remain distinguishable in an ordinary scheduling difficulty too. Polina is responsible for what she proposes and accepts; the other person for their own promises and replies. External conditions may limit both, without making them guilty of every limitation. This does not mean every arrangement must be accepted. A person may decline an unsuitable format even if nobody acted maliciously. Understanding circumstances and choosing to continue rest on different grounds. Limited availability can be acknowledged as real while a relationship with that availability is declined. Compassion creates no obligation to endure inconvenience indefinitely or prove the fairness of every refusal.

If repetition brings intense distress or is difficult to discuss alone, a conversation with a competent professional may be a separate support option. This article identifies no clinical

cause, attachment style or diagnosis from several relationships. It prescribes no treatment and replaces no help when safety is threatened. Everything need not first be explained through childhood to earn the right to speak about what happened. A concrete difficulty and need for support can be described. Appropriate help depends on the situation and location; private writing may be insufficient or unwanted. The right to stop inquiry remains, even while a hypothesis about repetition is unfinished.

VIII. Not every resemblance is a mistake

Recurring preferences may express qualities that matter. Polina enjoys shared interests, an independent conversational partner and lively exchange. These need not become suspect because the relationships failed to take the desired form. What is attractive can remain while a participation condition is clarified separately. This distinction promises no necessary combination of desired qualities, but does not require abandoning them in advance to correct oneself. Preference and tolerable behaviour are different questions. Valuing vivid conversation does not mean consenting to broken promises; wanting an independent partner does not mean relinquishing mutual agreements or a right to sufficient availability.

Sometimes what repeats is a way of describing different outcomes. Two histories may receive one label after disappointment, although one involved mutual closure and another prolonged waiting for an unclear answer. Accuracy need not erase shared pain. Still, differences between events matter if they affect today's question. Perhaps Polina wants to state desired regularity earlier, accept a definite refusal sooner or obtain support after a relationship ends. Those tasks call for different actions. One explanation of every repetition may obscure a concrete need that can already be expressed without a final theory about personal choice and another person's character.

Change need not mean choosing an opposite person. It could involve a clearer question, a different decision time or declining an inconvenient format after an understandable reply. Even these need not become compulsory goals for every encounter. One may enjoy conversation without a relationship project, choose being alone, pause or remain in suitable contact. Polina owes no proof that her type has changed. What matters is which conditions she now chooses and is unwilling to accept. Resemblance itself has no single moral value. Its significance depends on the feature, events and question, rather than a requirement always to move toward novelty.

IX. A small decision instead of an ultimate cause

After a bounded examination, Polina may find that available regularity is the important question. She has proved neither why two people resembled each other nor a stable personal type. But in another voluntary contact she can state an important condition. The other person may answer differently, not share the intention or decline discussion. Polina then chooses in light of the available reply. This is no test of a true essence or means of forcing compatibility. A clear question sometimes brings an unwanted answer; its value need not lie in preserving a relationship. A difference can be noticed earlier while disappointment remains, without making the reflection a failure.

A small step may also concern an ended contact without requiring its renewal. One could clarify a description, preserve uncertainty in memory or discuss support with a chosen listener. A past hypothesis need not be checked with an ex-partner. Access to them is no condition of personal decisions about the future. Material causing excessive strain can be set aside. Practical protection, when needed, matters more than analytical completeness. A finished note is not a finished experience. An ultimate explanation can remain absent when today's condition is already clear or continued inquiry no longer helps a particular question. Life can continue without a persuasive account of every past connection.

At the next resemblance, an earlier hypothesis does not automatically become proven. A new case adds particular material, but may differ in an important feature. Polina might recognise a confident manner and separately learn a different schedule or intention. Comparison stays open to revision. There is no need to celebrate a broken pattern in advance or fear that it has returned. Today's action can be considered within its own scope. Past experience helps formulate a question, but cannot answer on behalf of today's person. This preserves memory without requiring its verdict to repeat, and caution without treating every pleasant acquaintance as a hidden threat in advance.

X. Discernment without a verdict

The epigraph from 1 Thessalonians concerns Christian discernment and retaining what is good in communal life. Its application here is bounded by an editorial comparison: a claim can be considered without immediately becoming final truth. This is no conclusion by the epistle's author about romantic partner choice. The text permits no provocation, testing of patience, demanded contact or conversion of every suffering into beneficial good. The religious context retains its own grounds and addressees. Comparison does not erase them for a general psychological method or require accepting one spiritual language in order to consider a personal history honestly.

Spinoza's philosophical angle, the study's profile comparison and the Christian text do not validate one another as three identical proofs. They help pose different questions: how did I connect a familiar detail with experience, what resemblance can research examine, and how can a first explanation remain open to discernment? The practical form below is editorial. It is no validated selection procedure, therapy or promise to end recurring relationships. Sources support bounded perspectives while particular decisions stay with the person. Their proximity creates no scientific guarantee, universal anthropology or agreement of all traditions about one explanation for why people meet and separate.

Polina can end her reflection without invoking fate. She sees two histories, a shared setting, an attractive detail and difficulty with regularity; their causes are not fully distinguished. That is enough to make a question more precise, but insufficient for a verdict on an entire life. New information might appear, or she might choose not to return to the subject. Her dignity and right to choose do not depend on an ultimate explanation. Repetition deserves attention in its particular form, rather than as proof of a defective person. What is desired can remain, what is unacceptable can be named, support requested and unknowns left unknown. This can be the boundary of today's inquiry, without requiring complete clarity before another safe step.

What this means in practice

If examining repetition appeals now, choose a small question and available material only. For example, consider two cases in which arranging time was difficult. For each, you could note what attracted you initially, which later action mattered, what was agreed and what remained an expectation. This is no personality questionnaire or requirement to reconstruct an entire history. Mark approximately remembered words as approximate; leave an unknown event open. Do not collect another person's private information to fill a table. The form can remain in memory, change or be unused. Its purpose is to help name a subject, rather than give scientific precision to personal memories.

Then name one possible explanation and one limit of that explanation. Perhaps the meetings began in a similar setting, which does not yet explain available time. Or a confident manner appealed, while supplying no information about regular participation. A complete list and winning account are unnecessary. Ask which already available material could clarify the hypothesis. If an answer requires unsafe contact, provocation, intrusion into privacy or an artificial new romance, that check need not occur. An unconfirmed hypothesis can remain. Incomplete knowledge does not cancel the right to decline, protect oneself or retain conditions that matter now.

Choose a proportionate present step if one is needed. It might be a voluntary question about meeting arrangements, a decision against accepting offered conditions or a conversation about support with an appropriate person. The step need not alter preferences or prove that

repetition has disappeared. Expect no compulsory relief, correct partner or removal of disappointment from writing. Where threats, violence or coercion exist, safety and appropriate local help come before analysis. Do not change prescribed professional care through private interpretation. If reflection intensifies distress or becomes endless, it can stop; the difficulty itself can be discussed with a competent professional, without a preliminary diagnosis of the reasons for choosing.

To finish, leave a brief account with a knowledge boundary: I noticed this resemblance in these cases; propose this connection; do not yet know this; and this condition matters for today's decision. This is an editorial form, not a compulsory report. Writing may remain private; neither a former nor current partner is owed all of it. New information can change the account without rewriting past uncertainty as confidence. It is also possible to finish without a next step if the question currently needs no action. The aim is not proving self-correction. It is enough not to surrender different events, another person's responsibility and one's right to choose to one broad label.

Key quotation

> *“Some point of resemblance.” — Benedict de Spinoza, Ethics, III, proposition XVI, R. H. M. Elwes's English translation. A philosophical angle on perceived similarity and affect, rather than an established cause of an individual's partner choice.*

Connections between traditions

• Spinoza's philosophy: selected proposition III.XVI considers perceived resemblance participating in affect. No transfer of the metaphysical system into personal diagnosis or an empirical relationship model. Selected primary text.

• Christianity: 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 retains its communal discernment context. The editorial comparison prescribes no partner tests, religious verdict or obligation to endure harm. World English Bible.

• Contemporary research: Park and MacDonald compared previous and current partners' self-reports in longitudinal data. Profile resemblance does not explain an individual history, all participation conditions or practice efficacy. Official abstract and metadata.

• The shared editorial question concerns precision in defining repetition. These are comparisons among different perspectives, with no assertion of one method or agreement among all traditions.

Sources

1. Benedict de Spinoza. *The Ethics*, III, proposition XVI and selected surrounding context. Translation from Latin by R. H. M. Elwes; printed edition date not established here. Project Gutenberg 3800, released 1 February 2003, updated 9 January 2021. Read: selected III.XVI–XVII passages and surrounding association context, metadata; not complete book or Latin critical text. Philosophical perspective, not a verified causal model of repeated romantic choice. Global reuse licence UNKNOWN; no raw-source import, embedding or training. Accessed text.

2. *1 Thessalonians* 5:21, context 5:19–22. Traditional Pauline attribution; collective World English Bible translators. Read: complete short chapter and explicit publisher public-domain text notice; not whole epistle or original critical text. Russian quotation is a brief editorial rendering, not a branded Russian WEB edition. Christian communal discernment, without partner tests or compulsory risky contact. Accessed chapter.

3. Yoobin Park, Geoff MacDonald. "Consistency between individuals' past and current romantic partners' own reports of their personalities." *PNAS* 116(26), 12793–12797, 25 June 2019; online 10 June 2019. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1902937116. PMID: 31182593. Read: complete official abstract and metadata only; full paper, detailed methods and data unread. Nine-year German longitudinal data and partner self-reports; specific profile similarity does not establish personal causes, inevitability or practice efficacy. Abstract's qualification about an alternative analytic approach retained. Reuse licence UNKNOWN; scientific direct quotes zero, raw-source import/embedding/training false. Official record.

Tags

partner choice, repetition, relationships, preferences, recognition, resemblance, discernment, personal history, observation, memory, hypothesis, explanation, unknowns, social circle, meeting circumstances, availability, agreement, expectation, responsibility, boundaries, safety, support, voluntariness, self-inquiry, Spinoza, Ethics, Christianity, 1 Thessalonians, Park, MacDonald, research, United Wisdom

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