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Developmental and Dyadic Perspectives on Commitment in Adult Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

We tested hypotheses concerning the developmental roots of becoming the “weak-link” (less committed) partner in adult romantic relationships and the associations between partners’ absolute and relative levels of commitment and dyadic outcomes. We examined 78 target 20- to 21-year-olds who were involved in a romantic relationship and who had been studied since birth. As predicted, people who received lower-quality support from caregivers in toddlerhood or who were less able to resolve conflicts with a best friend in midadolescence were more likely to become the weak-link partner in a romantic relationship at age 20 to 21. Furthermore, lower commitment on the part of the weak-link partner coupled with greater discrepancy in commitment between partners predicted a greater likelihood that the couple would display hostility (rated by observers) during a videotaped conflict-resolution task when they were 20 to 21 years old. These findings are discussed from developmental and dyadic perspectives.

Keywords

commitment, hostility, romantic relationships, weak-link partners, developmental trajectories

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When one surveys research on intimate relationships, some stark ironies become apparent. For example, despite suggestions that patterns of interdependence in adult relationships should be affected by earlier relationships with parents and close friends (e.g., Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999), remarkably little is known about whether or how relationships encountered earlier in life “set the stage” for an individual’s later adult relationships. In addition, even though relationships involve two people and intrinsically dyadic processes and outcomes, many investigators continue to adopt an individual-centered perspective when thinking about and studying romantic relationships.

In the research reported here, we adopted developmental and dyadic approaches to examine (a) how significant relationships earlier in life are systematically associated with relative levels of commitment in adult romantic relationships and (b) how absolute and relative levels of commitment affect how couples behave in conflict-resolution situations. We focused on commitment because it is a central theoretical construct in the study of relationships (Kelley, 1983; Kiesler, 1971; Rusbult, 1980) and one of the most powerful predictors of relationship disharmony and dissolution (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Rusbult, Arriaga, & Agnew, 2001). Indeed, from a theoretical

perspective, commitment may be the best single barometer of relationship stability (Rusbult, 1983).

Commitment should predict how much hostility is expressed in relationships, especially when partners have incompatible goals or interests. Highly committed people are motivated to behave in an accommodative manner when trying to resolve disagreements with their partners (Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Moreover, the inability or unwillingness to behave constructively when a partner’s interests diverge from one’s own or when a partner behaves badly is one of the best predictors of negative relationship outcomes (see Rusbult et al., 2001).

Relationship Commitment: The Centrality of the Weak-Link Partner

According to the principle of least interest (Waller & Hill, 1951), the partner in a relationship who has less to lose if the relationship ends—that is, the *weak-link partner*—should be in a

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stronger position to dictate important terms and conditions within the relationship than the partner who has more to lose—that is, the *strong-link partner*. According to interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), the weak-link partner should be less dependent on the relationship for good outcomes because he or she is less satisfied, is less invested, or has better alternatives to the current relationship than the strong-link partner does.

Thus, weak-link versus strong-link status in a relationship should predict important relationship outcomes, above and beyond the main effects associated with each partner's score on a given measure, such as commitment (Attridge, Berscheid, & Simpson, 1995; Waller & Hill, 1951). In a study supporting this premise, Attridge et al. found that the weak-link partner's satisfaction and relationship commitment predicted eventual dissolution in dating couples, above and beyond other information provided separately by each partner. This suggests that the commitment of the weak-link partner may be especially diagnostic of important relationship outcomes. Moreover, Agnew (1999) found that the "less interested" partner in a dyad (i.e., the weak-link partner) is the partner who is more likely to determine the couple's interdependent behaviors (e.g., deciding whether and when to use condoms).

The Developmental Construction of the Weak-Link Partner

Despite the fact that weak-link partners have greater influence on relationship outcomes than strong-link partners do, nothing is known about the developmental course of becoming the weak-link partner in adult romantic relationships. Past research has focused almost exclusively on the proximal relationship features that shape commitment in adult romantic partnerships (Rusbult, Coolsen, Kirchner, & Clarke, 2006). In the research reported here, we adopted a developmental perspective. Given that individuals' significant relationships show meaningful patterns of development across the life span (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Collins & van Dulmen, 2006; Furman & Wehner, 1994; Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005), we explored how a person's history of close relationships relates to whether he or she is likely to become the weak-link or the strong-link partner in subsequent adult romantic relationships. Despite important differences between involuntary, hierarchical parent-child relationships and voluntary, egalitarian friendships and romantic relationships, an individual's behaviors should be similar across these relational domains to the extent that experiences with significant relationship partners influence one's expectations and later interactions with future partners (Carlson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2004; Collins, 1995; Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990). Because individuals adapt to new partners by assimilating new experiences to expectations developed in past relationships, early caregiver-child relationships and friendships should exert a particularly strong influence on an individual's later romantic relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999).

Past research has documented that the quality of early parent-child relationships is systematically connected to

expectations and interactions in later adult romantic relationships, and that this influence is above and beyond the contributions of proximal variables (see Sroufe et al., 2005). For example, individuals who have more secure relationships with their caregivers early in life tend to experience more growth over time in their commitment to their romantic partners early in adulthood (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). These findings suggest that important features of adult romantic relationships can be affected by the quality of individuals' prior relationship histories.

To investigate who is more likely to become the weak-link versus the strong-link partner within an adult romantic relationship, we examined target individuals' developmentally salient socioemotional experiences with parents and friends at two earlier stages of life. We hypothesized that having unsupportive or negative interactions with significant others early in development should predict becoming the partner who is less dependent on the current romantic relationship for good outcomes. Such early negative experiences may lead individuals to doubt the responsiveness and concern of close others, and consequently to invest less in romantic relationships. Early negative social experiences may also activate self-protective motives as a means to avoid being hurt or receiving "poor returns" on future interpersonal investments. By assuming the weak-link role in romantic relationships, individuals should have greater power within their relationships, and they should have less to lose if and when their relationships dissolve (Attridge et al., 1995).

The two developmental experiences we examined were target participants' interactions with their mothers while performing challenging tasks at age 2 and targets' style of resolving conflicts with their best friend at age 16. Learning how to balance autonomy needs with intimacy needs is a critical developmental task, particularly during toddlerhood and adolescence. Both of these developmental stages are important consolidation points during which individuals must learn to become independent and to effectively negotiate their own needs, desires, and personal interests with significant others.

A Dyadic Perspective on Commitment and Dyadic Hostility

Although no past research has examined whether developmental trajectories forecast who becomes the weak-link versus the strong-link partner in adult romantic relationships, more is known about ties between commitment and certain dyadic outcomes. For example, research using individual-centered models has found that people who are more committed to a relationship (i.e., those who score higher on commitment measures) inhibit negative responses more and react in more constructive and benevolent ways when their partners behave poorly than less committed people do (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Van Lange et al., 1997). This inhibition of negative responses, in turn, prevents or curtails escalating cycles of negative behavior in couples.

A dyad-centered perspective supplements these findings by suggesting that relationship functioning should be more contingent on the weak-link partner's than on the strong-link partner's level of commitment to the relationship. Moreover, partners' relative commitment levels should also affect the dynamics of their relationship. Moving toward a dyadic perspective on commitment, Drigotas et al. (1999) claimed that "when one person's level of commitment is substantially greater than (or lower than) that of his or her partner, relationships do not fare well" (pp. 408–409). This hypothesis (which Drigotas et al. did not test) implies that the discrepancy between partners' commitment levels might be more consequential for relationship harmony than is either partner's absolute level of commitment, even if both partners score relatively high in commitment to the relationship (Attridge et al., 1995; Waller & Hill, 1951). Therefore, relatively low absolute levels of commitment by one partner might not always be associated with poor relationship outcomes, and relatively high absolute commitment levels by one partner might not always be tied to good outcomes.

Thus, the weak-link partner's level of commitment to the relationship, in combination with the degree of discrepancy between the partners' commitment to the relationship, should uniquely predict relationship outcomes. For example, if both partners are highly committed to the relationship and there is little discrepancy in their commitment levels, they should inhibit negative responses during conflict. If the weak-link partner has relatively low commitment (compared with other individuals who are weak-link partners) and there is a small commitment discrepancy between the weak-link partner and his or her strong-link partner, both partners should be relatively unlikely to want changes from each other during conflict. Consequently, they should have little motivation to display and reciprocate negative responses. If, however, the weak-link partner is relatively low on commitment (compared with other individuals who are weak-link partners) and his or her strong-link partner is much more strongly committed (i.e., there is a large discrepancy in commitment), these partners should display the most dysfunctional patterns of conflict, especially the demand-withdraw pattern. This pattern is evident when criticisms from the strong-link partner, who may want change, are met with defensiveness from the weak-link partner, who should strive to keep the strong-link partner at bay (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). Accordingly, we tested whether the weak-link partner's absolute level of commitment to the relationship and the degree of discrepancy between the strong-link partner's and the weak-link partner's commitment predicted the degree to which each couple displayed and reciprocated cold and distancing behavior (hostility) during a videotaped conflict-resolution and collaboration task.

The Current Study

The current investigation is based on data from the Minnesota Longitudinal Study of Risk and Adaptation (MLSRA), a prospective study of at-risk target participants and their families

(Sroufe et al., 2005). At age 20 to 21, MLSRA target participants and their romantic partners of 4 or more months were invited to participate in a couples assessment. Targets and their partners first independently completed self-report questionnaires that assessed their current relationship and then completed a videotaped conflict-resolution and collaboration discussion task. We tested three hypotheses:

- Hypotheses 1 and 2: Two hypotheses concerned developmental originals of status as the weak or strong link in adult romantic relationships. Hypothesis 1 was that the quality of maternal support and caregiving observed during challenging tasks (when target participants were 24 months old) would predict targets' status as the weak or strong link in their adult romantic relationships about 20 years later. Specifically, we hypothesized that receiving higher-quality care at age 2 would predict a lower probability of being the weak-link partner in romantic relationships at ages 20 to 21. Hypothesis 2 was that targets' quality of conflict resolution with their best friend at age 16 would also forecast their status as the weak or strong link in later romantic relationships. Specifically, we hypothesized that greater use of functional conflict-resolution tactics (behaviors indicative of mutuality and interpersonal sensitivity) with a best friend at age 16 would predict a lower likelihood of being the weak-link partner in later romantic relationships.
- Hypothesis 3: Our third hypothesis was that relatively low commitment to the relationship on the part of the weak-link partner coupled with a relatively large discrepancy between the commitment levels of the weak- and strong-link partners would predict increased levels of observer-rated dyadic hostility.

Method

Participants

As noted, the data were collected as part of the MLSRA. Fifty-eight percent of the target participants in the full sample are European American, 14% are African American, 3% are Native American or Latino, 16% are of mixed racial background, and 9% cannot be classified because data on their fathers' race are missing. The full sample is 55% male and 45% female.

We focused on a subset of the full sample ($N = 78$ target participants), all of whom were involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship of 4 months or longer and participated in couples assessment when they were 20 to 21 years old. The mean length of the relationships was 27.75 months ($SD = 22.01$).

Developmental precursors

Parenting quality at age 24 months. When targets were 24 months old, they engaged in four videotaped problem-solving

tasks with their mothers. Because the tasks were designed to be increasingly difficult and above each child's capabilities, each toddler needed assistance from his or her mother to complete each task. Trained observers rated each caregiver's (each mother's) behavior during these interactions on a 5-point Parenting Quality scale that measured the quality of support and sensitivity to the child's emotional and developmental needs during the tasks. High scores were given to mothers who were consistently supportive, enthusiastic, and patient throughout the tasks without being controlling or intrusive. The intraclass correlation across the trained observers was .82.

Conflict resolution with a friend at age 16. When targets were 16 years old, they completed an hour-long audio-taped interview about their best friendship. Trained coders then used a 7-point Friendship Conflict Resolution scale to rate how each target typically resolved conflicts with his or her best friend. High scores were given to targets who reported displaying mutual compromise, commitment to maintaining the friendship, and effective and fair approaches to conflict resolution. The interrater reliability was .61.

Romantic-relationship assessments

Commitment at age 20 to 21. When targets were 20 to 21 years old, they and their current romantic partners independently completed relationship measures, including Lund's (1985) Commitment Scale. Responses to this scale were made on 7-point Likert-type scales from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very/a lot); ($\alpha_{\text{female}} = .66$, $\alpha_{\text{male}} = .59$).

Dyadic hostility. Each couple engaged in a videotaped observational lab procedure. They first discussed the problem that caused the most conflict in their relationship for 10 min while trying to resolve it. They then discussed areas on which they agreed the most in their relationship for 4 min. Seven trained observers rated each videotaped interaction on a 7-point scale that assessed the level of hostility displayed. This measure assessed the extent to which each couple displayed a cold and rejecting demeanor that reflected hopelessness and futility about the relationship (Collins et al., 1999). High scores were given to a dyad if the partners tried to distance themselves from each other psychologically or emotionally, showed little remorse or recognition that they may have hurt each other during the interaction, or expressed little or no hope of salvaging the relationship. Lower scores were given to a couple if neither partner engaged in hostile behaviors or one partner engaged in hostile behaviors while the other consistently tried to defuse hostility. The intraclass correlation for the raters' scores was .96.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the measures of developmental precursors, relationship commitment, and dyadic hostility appear in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we first determined whether

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Mean	SD	n
Target's commitment	5.89	0.79	78
Partner's commitment	5.97	0.72	78
Overall parenting quality, age 24 months	3.24	1.15	68
Conflict resolution with best friend, age 16	3.76	1.18	74
Dyadic hostility	2.22	1.60	72

Note: The scale for scoring parenting quality ranged from 1 to 5. All other scales ranged from 1 to 7.

each target participant was the weak-link or the strong-link partner in his or her relationship by examining partners' scores on the Commitment Scale. If the target participant scored lower than his or her romantic partner, he or she was classified as the weak-link partner; if the target scored higher than his or her partner, he or she was classified as the strong-link partner.¹

Developmental precursors

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we regressed the dichotomous weak-link/strong-link variable (i.e., target is the weak-link partner vs. target is the strong-link partner) on the developmental precursors (observer-rated parenting quality at age 24 months and observer-rated friendship conflict resolution at age 16 years) in two separate logistic regressions. For each analysis, an odds ratio greater than 1 indicates that targets were more likely to be classified as the strong-link partner with each unit increase in either observer-rated parenting quality at age 24 months or conflict resolution at age 16, whereas an odds ratio less than 1 indicates that targets were more likely to be the weak-link partner with each such unit increase.²

Parenting quality. The analysis of parenting quality supported Hypothesis 1: The quality of parenting when targets were 24 months old predicted targets' eventual weak-link/strong-link status. As the quality of rated parenting increased, targets were less likely to be the weak-link partner in their romantic relationships about 20 years later (see Table 2).

Friendship conflict resolution. The analysis of conflict resolution with best friends supported Hypothesis 2: The quality of friendship conflict resolution when targets were age 16 also predicted eventual weak-link/strong-link status (see Table 2). If target participants were rated as resolving conflict with their best friend in a more mutually satisfying manner and were rated as using more effective and fair tactics, they were less likely to be the weak-link partner in their later romantic relationships.

Table 2. Predicting Weak-Link Status

Predictor	β	SE	df	Wald χ^2	Odds ratio
Overall parenting quality, age 24 months	0.47*	0.23	65	4.11	1.59
Conflict resolution with best friend, age 16	0.57*	0.25	70	5.35	1.78

* $p < .05$.

Concurrent dyadic hostility

The discrepancy between partners' commitment scores was calculated by regressing the strong-link partner's scores onto the weak-link partner's scores and saving the residual values (i.e., the deviations of the fitted line from the observed line).³ Next, we calculated correlations among the weak-link partner's commitment score, the strong-link partner's commitment score, the discrepancy between relationship partners' commitment scores, the target participant's developmental precursors, and dyadic hostility at age 20 to 21. The results, shown in Table 3, revealed that the weak-link partner's commitment score ($r = -.34$) and strong-link partner's commitment score ($r = -.32$) were both negatively associated with observer-rated dyadic hostility. Thus, less commitment reported by both the weak-link partner and the strong-link partner predicted greater dyadic hostility during the conflict discussions with romantic partners when targets were 20 to 21 years old.

To test Hypothesis 3, we ran a hierarchical regression analysis in which observer-rated dyadic hostility was regressed on the weak-link partner's commitment score, the strong-link partner's commitment score, and the gender of the weak-link partner in Step 1; the discrepancy between the two partners' commitment scores was added in Step 2, and the two-way interaction between the weak-link partner's commitment score and the size of the within-couple commitment discrepancy

was added in Step 3. To decompose the interaction, we calculated simple regression slopes by estimating predicted dyadic hostility when each predictor was 1 standard deviation above the sample mean and 1 standard deviation below the sample mean (Aiken & West, 1991).⁴

Only the weak-link partner's gender predicted dyadic hostility (see Table 4). When weak-link partners were female, rather than male, couples displayed greater observer-rated hostility in the conflict interactions. Partially supporting Hypothesis 3, this analysis revealed a marginally significant two-way interaction between the weak-link partner's commitment score and the discrepancy between the two partners' commitment scores (see Table 4). As illustrated in Figure 1, when there was relatively little discrepancy between partners' commitment scores (i.e., when partners had similar commitment scores), couples displayed moderate levels of hostility regardless of the weak-link partner's level of commitment. However, when there was a larger discrepancy between partners' commitment scores, a lower level of commitment on the part of the weak-link partner was associated with greater hostility. The full model accounted for 20% of the variance in observer-rated hostility.

Discussion

These findings indicate that developmental and dyadic perspectives can contribute to understanding the origins and outcomes of commitment to romantic relationships in early adulthood. We documented that the probability of becoming the weak-link partner in adult romantic relationships depends on the quality of important relationships experienced earlier in life. Individuals who received lower-quality parenting from their mothers at age 2 or were less able to resolve conflicts effectively with their best friend at age 16 were more likely to be the less committed (weak-link) partner in their adult romantic relationships at age 20 to 21. Thus, less supportive and sensitive parenting in toddlerhood and difficulties resolving conflicts with a best friend in adolescence appear to be

Table 3. Correlations Among Relationship Commitment, Developmental Precursors, and Dyadic Hostility

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Weak-link partner's commitment	—				
2. Strong-link partner's commitment ($n = 75$)	.71**	—			
3. Discrepancy between partners' commitment ($n = 75$)	-.54**	-.07	—		
4. Overall parenting quality, age 24 months ($n = 66$)	.10	.13	-.06**	—	
5. Conflict resolution with friend, age 16 ($n = 71$)	.02	.04	-.01	.22*	—
6. Dyadic hostility with romantic partner at age 20–21 ($n = 69$)	-.34**	-.32**	.14	-.32**	-.30*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Predicting Dyadic Hostility From Commitment (*n* = 69)

Step and predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²
Step 1				
Weak-link partner's commitment	-0.51	0.34	-0.24	.18
Strong-link partner's commitment	-0.24	0.40	-0.09	
Gender of weak-link partner	0.49*	0.18	0.30*	
Step 2				
Weak-link partner's commitment	-0.38	0.47	-0.17	.17
Strong-link partner's commitment	-0.34	0.47	-0.13	
Gender of weak-link partner	0.49*	0.19	0.30*	
Discrepancy between partners' commitment	0.26	0.63	0.06	
Step 3				
Weak-link partner's commitment	-0.29	0.47	-0.13	.20
Strong-link partner's commitment	-0.19	0.47	-0.07	
Gender of weak-link partner	0.52**	0.18	0.32**	
Discrepancy between partners' commitment	-0.20	0.66	-0.05	
Weak-Link Partner's Commitment × Discrepancy Between Partners' Commitment	-1.16 [†]	0.63	-0.25 [†]	

[†]*p* < .06. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01.

risk factors for becoming the weak-link partner in adult relationships.

Our findings also show that the prediction of certain dyadic outcomes can be improved by assessing the commitment of both partners to each other. When the weak-link partner was

less committed to the relationship compared with other weak-link partners in the sample, couples were more likely to reciprocate hostile behaviors during a conflict discussion if the relationship partners' commitment scores were highly discrepant than if they were relatively similar. These results extend those of Drigotas et al. (1999) and Attridge et al. (1995) by showing that the mutuality of both partners' levels of commitment and the level of the weak-link partner's commitment jointly affect dyadic functioning.

Future research needs to clarify why poor parenting quality early in childhood and poor conflict negotiation at age 16 forecast weak-link status in adult romantic relationships. We suspect that early negative social experiences instill strong self-protective motives to avoid being hurt or to forestall losing or receiving "poor returns" on future interpersonal investments. Individuals who have negative relationship histories may become dominant in their relationships, eventually becoming weak-link partners, to obtain greater power or autonomy. Having a history of unsupportive or conflictual relationships may also undermine an individual's ability to use relationship-maintenance processes effectively. Such people might be less likely than others to derogate attractive alternative partners (Miller, 1997; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990), perpetuating their belief that better potential partners are still available. Such people may also be less able than others to sustain positive illusions about their partners, which protect relationships from threats and downturns (Murray & Holmes, 1997).

In contrast, if an individual learns how to navigate issues involving intimacy and commitment with close others successfully early in development, having a history of positive and supportive relationships may bolster his or her trust in and reliance on partners, regardless of the changes or stressors

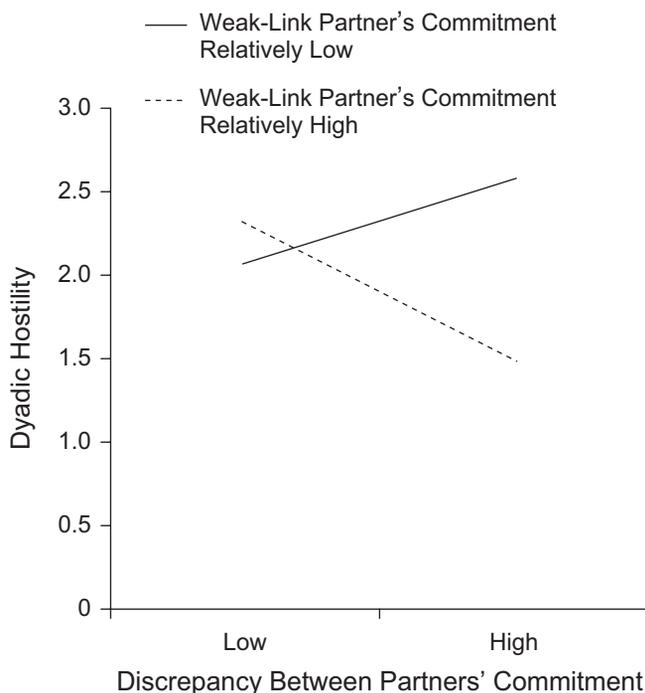


Fig. 1. Results of the regression analysis predicting dyadic hostility: interaction between the weak-link partner's commitment and the discrepancy between partners' commitment. Predicted values of dyadic hostility are plotted for participants scoring 1 standard deviation above and 1 standard deviation below the sample mean on each measure of commitment.

these relationships are likely to face. Higher levels of trust, in turn, should motivate a strong-link partner to enact more pro-relationship behaviors, thereby increasing both partners' commitment to the relationship across time (Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999).

Although we did not predict that hostility would be greater when the weak-link partner was a female rather than a male, this result is not surprising. Women are more likely to use language to reinforce intimacy and maintain relationships, whereas men strive to maintain independence and consolidate their status (Tannen, 1994). Thus, when women are the weak links in relationships, there should be fewer attempts to reinforce intimacy and maintain the relationships.

Even though our findings are prospective, they are correlational and cannot address questions of causality. For example, we do not know whether receiving lower-quality parenting early in life causes people to become weak-link partners in their adult romantic relationships. Furthermore, other intervening experiences (e.g., therapy, a beneficent mentor or friend) during development might prevent individuals from becoming weak-link partners in adulthood. What our findings *do* imply is that more negative interpersonal experiences with parents or a best friend earlier in life predict eventual weak-link status in romantic relationships.

Our use of multiple methods and informants to assess target participants' relationships at different points of their lives strengthens our confidence in these results. These results, for example, cannot be attributed to shared method variance, and it is impressive to find theoretically meaningful associations between constructs that were measured across nearly 20 years of developmental history.

In conclusion, this research addresses a major gap in the commitment literature by elucidating how early socioemotional experiences contribute to patterns of interdependence within adult romantic relationships. Developmental and dyadic perspectives contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of current relationship dynamics. Our perspectives and findings are also likely to have important implications for how relationship counselors and therapists view and assess romantic couples and help them achieve more positive relationship outcomes.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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Notes

1. In three cases, the target could not be classified as the weak-link or the strong-link partner because the partners had identical commitment scores. These couples were dropped from the analyses.
2. Secondary analyses were conducted to ensure that our findings were not attributable to relationship length or the gender of the weak-link partner. All reported effects remained statistically significant when we controlled for gender of the weak-link partner, and all remained at least marginally significant when we controlled for relationship length (all $ps < .06$).
3. Difference scores tend to be unreliable (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Cronbach & Furby, 1970), and they are problematic because they are correlated with the two scores that create them (in our study, the weak-link scores correlated negatively with the difference score for each dyad). Residualized scores are widely used because they are both reliable and not highly correlated with the scores that create them (Williams, Zimmerman, Rich, & Steed, 1984).
4. Secondary analyses indicated that the effects did not change when we controlled for relationship length. Furthermore, relationship length, the interactions of the main effects with relationship length, and the interactions of the main effects with gender of the weak-link partner also did not significantly predict dyadic hostility.

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