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AN ORGANIZATIONAL– DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON FUNCTIONING IN ADULT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

JESSICA E. SALVATORE, W. ANDREW COLLINS,
AND JEFFRY A. SIMPSON

The building blocks of successful adult romantic relationships, such as trust, intimacy, and effective conflict resolution, do not appear *ex nihilo*. Rather, competence in adult romantic relationships relies on capacities developed in earlier relationships with parents and peers (see Chapters 3, 5, and 6, this volume). Identifying the legacy of early experience on adult romantic relationship functioning is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Moreover, examining a person's developmental history in combination with his or her concurrent relationship functioning allows one to generate novel hypotheses about the future outcomes for both the person and his or her relationship.

In this chapter, we adopt an organizational–developmental perspective on couple functioning in early adulthood. We begin by outlining the principles of an organizational perspective on development, paying particular attention to the implications for individual differences in adult romantic relationship functioning. We then discuss findings from a prospective longitudinal study that links individuals' adult romantic relationship outcomes with their early caregiving experiences. These findings illustrate how a developmental perspective can illuminate the origins of individual differences in romantic

competence. Finally, we discuss a promising future direction for developmental research on adult romantic relationships.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDYING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

The organizational perspective rests on the assumption that the intensity or frequency of any thought, feeling, or behavior is less important than its orchestration with other thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Though widely accepted today, this premise was controversial during the third quarter of the 20th century when Mischel (1968, 1973) and others (e.g., Masters & Wellman, 1974) demonstrated that the frequency and intensity of discrete behaviors such as smiling or crying fluctuate across time and situations. One conclusion from this body of work was that individual differences in behavior at a single point in time were poor predictors of future behavior. The organizational perspective on development (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005) emerged from foundational concepts that existed at the dawn of developmental psychology (Collins & Hartup, in press). This perspective emphasizes the processes through which behavioral expectancies developed in early relationships are carried forward into novel social contexts. Expectations must be adjusted by building on the past, but also by gaining sensitivity to how present circumstances vary from past ones (Piaget, 1952; Sander, 1962, 1975; Spitz, Emde, & Metcalf, 1970; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Waddington, 1957; Werner, 1948). Bowlby (1982) and Ainsworth (1989) advanced views that were complementary to earlier formulations by emphasizing the significance of the quality of care experienced by children across different developmental periods.

When focusing on how behavior in relationships is organized rather than frequency of events, the problem of prediction becomes tractable. A primary advantage of an organizational perspective is that one can improve the prediction of interpersonal behavior across both time and different contexts. Imagine, for example, a romantic couple in which both partners rely on each other for emotional support when one or both partners are upset. The discrete behaviors that partners enact toward one another on a daily basis, especially in situations that do not call for caregiving, are unlikely to be a good predictor of the quality and amount of support one partner gives the other when he or she is distressed (see Chapter 8). From an organizational perspective such as attachment theory, however, one would interpret the quality and amount of support seeking and support giving displayed when partners are upset as an expression of the quality of the secure base that characterizes their relationship. Moreover, the extent to which partners serve as a secure base for each other ought to be man-

ifested differently in other situations, such as encouraging partners to engage in greater exploration in nonstressful situations.

Given that any discrete behavior can take on different meaning depending on the behaviors with which it co-occurs, a second advantage of adopting an organizational perspective is that it allows one to make different predictions about concurrent versus future couple functioning. Consider the following examples of negative affect in two romantic dyads. In both dyads, one partner implores the other to make it home for dinner on time. The partner in the first dyad responds by raising his or her voice and blaming rush-hour traffic for his or her tardiness. In contrast, the partner in the second dyad averts his or her gaze, walks away, and mumbles sarcastically about needing to “try harder” to get home on time in the future. Although the partners in both dyads respond to the punctuality request with negative affect and displeasure, the specific coordination of their affect with other behaviors reflects their actual interest in solving the problem. One person responds angrily but advocates his or her position with the goal of receiving leniency in the future. The second person walls-off, shielding himself or herself from further criticism and limiting the opportunity for a collaborative resolution to the problem. Thus, the pattern of behavior within which negative affect is embedded may be more important than the presence versus absence of negative affect. This, in fact, is the basis for distinguishing between anger (in the first couple) and hostility (in the second couple), or what Bowlby (1973) called the “anger of hope” versus the “anger of despair.”

A third guiding principle of the organizational perspective is that the patterning of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in close relationships is rooted in early experiences with caregivers, particularly parents (Sroufe et al., 2005; see also Chapter 3, this volume). Early experiences with caregivers carry unique importance because they are the “initiating conditions” that foreshadow how individuals are likely to behave in future social environments. Early experiences with caregivers, including those that occur before children can talk, establish initial expectations about the benevolence and availability of significant others and, correspondingly, beliefs about the worth of the self. Furthermore, overlearned interaction patterns that become established in early relationships often lay the groundwork for interpersonal organized action sequences (i.e., automatized behavioral routines) that are drawn on when similar situations occur in the future (Berscheid, 1983). Similar to Bowlby’s (1982, 1973) concept of internal working models, organized action sequences exist outside of conscious awareness and control. As a consequence, once a sequence is activated, it usually runs off until completed.

This early foreshadowing, of course, is probabilistic, not deterministic. Negative early experiences do not condemn individuals to a lifetime of dissatisfying close relationships, nor do positive early experiences inoculate against

unhappiness. True to its roots in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973), the organizational perspective holds that individual functioning reflects both an individual's history and his or her current circumstances. We consider this assertion later in the chapter.

TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP REPRESENTATIONS AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR ACROSS DEVELOPMENT

An emphasis on the significance of early caregiving experiences across the life span raises the question, What is the mechanism that brings these early experiences forward? Relationship representations (i.e., internal working models) are one probable mechanism (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999, 2008). Relationship representations involve expectations, attitudes, and beliefs about the accessibility and responsiveness of significant others in relationships and, therefore, one's worth and value as a relationship partner. These representations begin to develop on the basis of repeated patterns of interaction with initial caregivers (Isabella & Belsky, 1991; Isabella, Belsky, & von Eye, 1989), and they continue to develop (and sometimes change) in response to interaction patterns with subsequent caregivers later in life (Carlson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2004; Vaughn, Egeland, Sroufe, & Waters, 1979; see also Chapter 2, this volume). Relationship representations operate in a top-down manner, guiding expectations, perceptions, and behavior in future interpersonal situations.

Consistent with Bowlby's (1973) theorizing, the organizational perspective views infant attachment security as marking the beginning of a transactional process between representations and social behavior that plays out across the life span (Carlson et al., 2004). This process is transactional in that representations and social behavior are mutually influential across time. In other words, instead of exerting unilateral influence, relationship representations affect social behavior and are also affected by it. A natural extension of this logic is that relationship representations are changeable in the face of new experiences that contradict previously held representations (Vaughn et al., 1979).

The complicated process of predicting a person's future social functioning based on his or her past requires identifying the salient developmental experiences and issues that individuals confront at each period of the life span. Each period presents a novel set of culturally defined socioemotional developmental issues that must be mastered (Erikson, 1963; Masten & Coatsworth, 1995; Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999; Sroufe et al., 2005). In infancy, the most salient task is forming an attachment to a stronger/wiser caregiver who can help to modulate arousal and promote infant survival. The prominence of infant-caregiver attachment begins to wane in the preschool years as the child enters the world of same-age peers. Although caregivers remain important

features of the child's social environment, attention is increasingly shifted toward peers as the child's social world expands. Peers continue to play a prominent role during middle childhood and adolescence as the individual balances group functioning with the establishment of close, same-sex and opposite-sex relationships (Sroufe et al., 2005).

These developmental issues are cumulative. Failure to successfully negotiate issues that are salient in the interpersonal experiences of earlier periods interferes with the ability to engage in later ones effectively because the individual is ill-equipped to handle increasingly sophisticated and challenging interpersonal demands. Consider the most salient socioemotional task of early childhood, which is to engage with peers successfully. Maintaining constructive, satisfying interactions with peers builds the intrapersonal behavioral and emotional regulatory capacities that were scaffolded by parents during infancy and toddlerhood (Sameroff & Emde, 1989; Sander, 1975; see also Chapter 6, this volume). For example, a preschooler who lacks these abilities and immediately becomes physically aggressive when frustrated is less likely to be integrated in group interactions over time. In addition, such children may also be excluded from positive peer interactions, thus losing opportunities to develop new skills that are needed to negotiate the socioemotional issues of middle childhood successfully.

Carlson et al. (2004) translated the transaction between relationship representations and social behavior across development into a measurement model using data from the Minnesota Longitudinal Study of Risk and Adaptation. According to this model, the connection between early caregiving experiences and late adolescent social behavior is a result of transactions between relationship representations and social behavior across time. Relationship representations in early childhood, middle childhood, and early adolescence were assessed using interviews and projective drawings. Social behavior was measured using teachers' rankings of participants' peer competence and emotional health obtained during each of these developmental periods. For the teacher rankings, participants' classroom teachers were given an age-appropriate description of peer competence and emotional health, which included criteria such as sociability, peer acceptance, and leadership (peer competence) and confidence, curiosity, self-assuredness, and engagement in new experiences and challenges (emotional health). Teachers then rank-ordered all students in their classrooms in terms of how well each child fit the description. Structural equation modeling was used to test the parsimony and fit of the transactional (i.e., cross-lagged) model compared with six others. Some of these alternative models examined the cumulative and noninteractive contributions of relationship representations and social behavior. Other models omitted data from specific developmental periods. The transactional model shown in Figure 7.1 provided the best fit to the data. These findings are

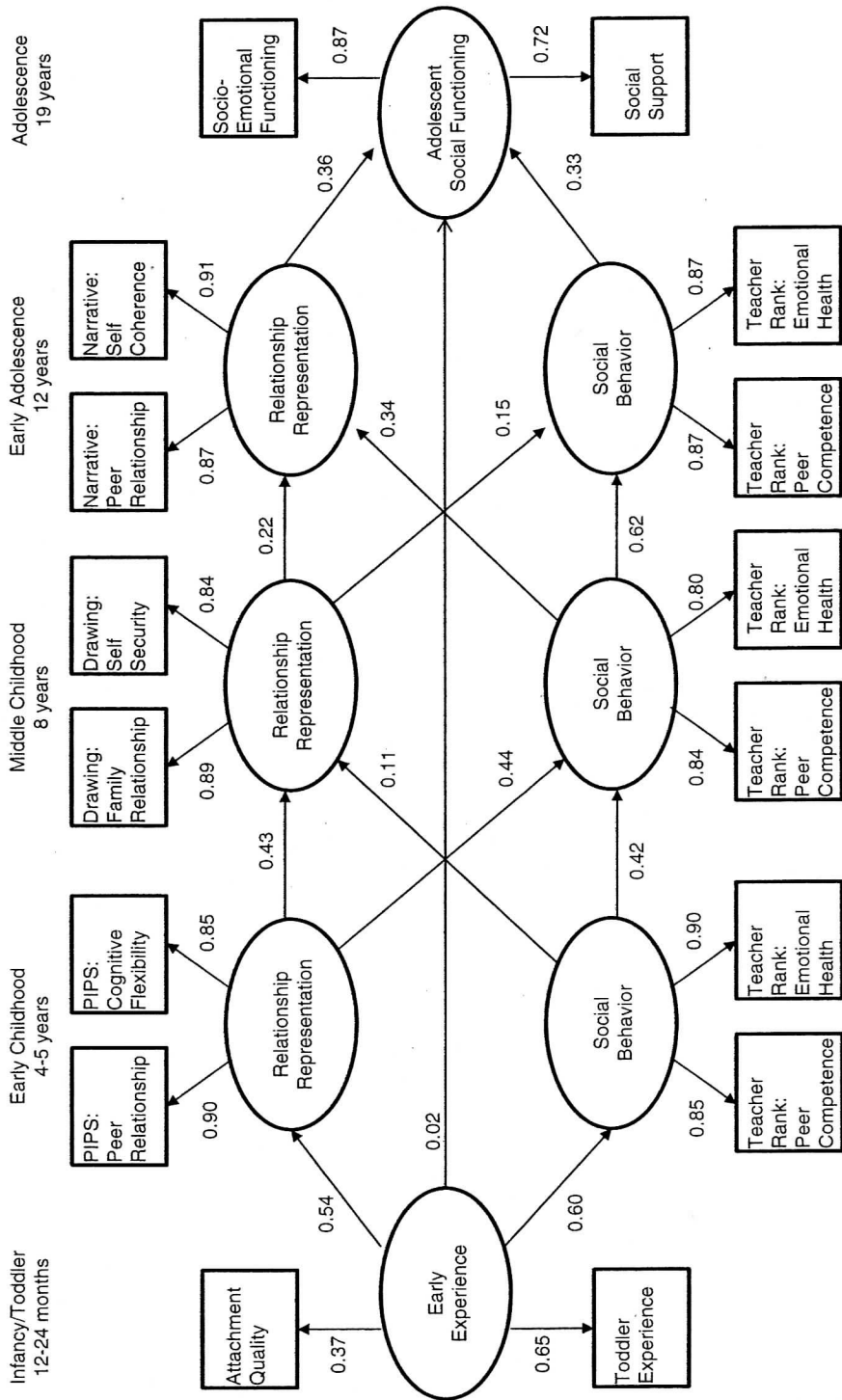


Figure 7.1. Cross-lagged model linking representations and social behavior across time. Numbers represent standardized path coefficients. PIPS = Preschool Interpersonal Problem-Solving Assessment. From "The Construction of Experience: A Longitudinal Study of Representation and Behavior," by E. A. Carlson, L. A. Sroufe, and B. Egeland, 2004, *Child Development*, 75, p. 78. Copyright 2007 by Blackwell Publishing. Reprinted with permission.

consistent with Bowlby's (1982, 1973) claim that early caregiving experiences initiate pathways of social functioning that are propagated through relationship representations and social experiences from each successive developmental period.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL–DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON ATTACHMENT AND BEHAVIOR IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Most successful relationships, defined as those that promote a positive sense of self and of one's partner and that have high levels of trust, intimacy, and sensitivity (Collins & van Dulmen, 2006; Sroufe et al., 2005), contain features of the good relationships that precede them. Individuals draw on the emotion regulation, peer engagement, and close relationship skills (e.g., intimacy, conflict resolution) from earlier developmental periods to meet the interpersonal challenges that arise in later relationships, such as balancing needs for autonomy and intimacy.

As mentioned previously, attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1989; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1982) provides a comprehensive account of behavioral organization in relationships across successive periods of the life span. This conceptual premise, coupled with measurement advances in attachment research during the past 3 decades (e.g., the development of the Adult Attachment Interview [AAI]; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985), has enriched our understanding of the important role of developmental history in adult social functioning, including the most salient socioemotional task of adulthood, establishing and maintaining romantic relationships (Ainsworth, 1989). The AAI is a semi-structured interview that assesses recollections of childhood experiences with parents and other attachment figures. The AAI is scored for discourse properties and violations of norms regarding clear and coherent communication. The degree to which respondents describe their childhoods with their parents in a clear, credible, and coherent manner is the primary criterion for determining attachment classifications on the AAI. As a result, some people who claim in the interview to be "secure" or to have had secure relationships with their parents during childhood are classified as insecure on the basis of the manner and coherence (rather than the content) of how they describe their childhoods. The AAI was designed to measure individuals' current state of mind with respect to past attachment issues rather than their childhood attachment to parents per se (Main et al.; 1985). Unless individuals have unusual, unresolved attachment issues or cannot be classified in a single attachment category, most people are assigned to one of three general categories: secure, dismissing (avoidant), and preoccupied.

Persons classified as secure on the AAI present a clear, well-supported description of their past relationship with both parents. Their episodic memories of childhood are vivid and coherent, and they have little difficulty recalling important childhood experiences, even if their upbringing was difficult. Persons classified as dismissing on the AAI typically view their parents and upbringing as normal or even ideal, but cannot support these claims with specific, episodic memories of significant childhood events. Others classified as dismissing actively disregard or dismiss the importance of attachment figures or attachment-related emotions and behavior. Individuals who are classified as preoccupied on the AAI usually discuss their childhood experiences with attachment figures extensively during the interview. Their interviews often reveal deep-seated, unresolved anger toward one or both parents, which taints their descriptions and interpretations of past experiences.

In one of the first studies to investigate how representations of early attachment experiences are related to perceptions and behavior in adulthood, Kobak and Sceery (1988) tested whether secure, dismissing, and preoccupied working models are associated with unique patterns of self–other representations and social behavior. They found that individuals who have secure representations of their parents on the AAI are rated by their peers as more ego resilient and less anxious than either of the insecure groups. In addition, the peers of secure adolescents rated them as less hostile than dismissing adolescents and less anxious than preoccupied adolescents. Kobak and Sceery (1988) also found that secure individuals report greater social competence and less psychological distress compared with preoccupied adolescents. Secure individuals also report less loneliness and greater social support from family than do dismissing adolescents. Similar attachment-related differences have been found in observational studies of peer problem solving (e.g., Zimmermann, Maier, Winter, & Grossmann, 2001), which reveal that secure individuals respond more constructively than do insecure people when their partners act negatively.

Kobak and Sceery's (1988) investigation foreshadowed numerous studies on how representations of early caregiving contribute to functioning in adult romantic relationships. Most of these studies have involved observational assessments of couples in contexts (e.g., support provision, conflict resolution) in which attachment-related behaviors should be witnessed. Stressful situations such as these ought to activate the attachment system (Bowlby, 1982; Simpson & Rholes, 2004). Moreover, they are ideal for understanding continuity in relationship functioning across time because stressful situations are "high-potential" contexts in which overlearned interaction patterns developed in prior attachment relationships, such as parent–child relationships, should be displayed. Consistent with this hypothesis, Creasey (2002) found that dif-

ferences between secure and insecure individuals' negative behavior (e.g., contempt, belligerence, domineering, stonewalling, defensiveness, sadness, anger) were more pronounced in a mildly stressful conflict management condition than in a low stress waiting-room condition. As predicted, insecure individuals exhibited more of these negative behaviors than did secure individuals (cf. Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992).

Roisman, Madsen, Hennighausen, Sroufe, and Collins (2001) found conceptually similar effects in their observational study of developmentally at-risk young adult romantic couples during a series of conflict and collaborative tasks. Specifically, they found that dyads that had secure individuals had higher quality interactions, resolved conflicts better, displayed more positive affect and secure base behaviors, and demonstrated better balance between good individual functioning and good couple functioning. Similar results, whereby more secure individuals displayed a higher ratio of positive-to-negative behaviors during a problem-solving discussion, were also documented in a young adult middle-class sample (Holland & Roisman, 2010). Above and beyond this contemporaneous correlation, Holland and Roisman (2010) also found that AAI security predicted increases in effective couple functioning over a 1-year period. Studying emotion regulation in marital dyads during a problem-solving task, Bouthillier Julien, Dubé, Bélanger, and Hamelin (2002) found that secure husbands engaged in more positive communication behaviors and were more responsive to, and less withdrawn from, their wives. Secure wives also displayed more supportive and responsive behaviors.

Individual differences in adult attachment representations of parents are also related to unique patterns of secure base behavior in romantic relationships. Crowell et al. (2002), for example, coded videotaped observations of engaged couples during a problem task on scales conceptualized as the adult analogs to Ainsworth and colleagues' description of secure base use and secure base support in parent-child relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Waters, Kondo-Ikemura, Posada, & Richters, 1991). Secure base use scores reflected the degree to which an individual clearly signaled his or her distress, maintained distress signals (if necessary), made direct bids for partner support, and was soothed by the partner's response (or by the self if the partner was unresponsive). Secure base support scores reflected the degree to which an individual expressed interest in the partner, recognized his or her distress, showed empathic understanding, and responded sensitively. As hypothesized, secure men and women scored higher in both secure base use and secure base support relative to their insecure counterparts. The same positive relation between secure base behavior and attachment security was also evident when the AAI coherence score was used instead of the secure versus insecure categories (Treboux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004).

Only one AAI study has examined how individuals who have different attachment representations of their parents respond to different forms of care. In a videotaped problem-solving discussion that investigated the degree to which instrumental and emotional forms of care provided by romantic partners calmed individuals who had different AAI classifications, secure individuals were rated as being more calmed when their partners gave them more emotional care, particularly when they were distressed. Conversely, dismissing individuals reacted more favorably to instrumental care from their partners, especially when they were distressed (Simpson, Winterheld, Rholes, & Oriña, 2007).

Other studies of adult attachment representations and behavior in romantic relationships have documented that secure individuals exhibit better functioning than insecure ones, though some studies have found gender differences. For example, Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, and Pearson (1992) examined young married couples who engaged in structured and unstructured interaction tasks with their preschool-age child. Secure men displayed more positive (i.e., pleasurable, warm, responsive, and interactive) and less negative (i.e., angry, displeasurable, disagreeing, and competitive) behavior than did insecure men. Women's behavior, however, did not differ as a function of their attachment representations. Gender differences explaining the connection between attachment security and the emotional tone of the marriage remained even when the AAI coherence score was used instead of the secure and insecure categories (Cowan, Cohn, Cowan, & Pearson, 1996). Paley, Cox, Burchinal, and Payne (1999), in contrast, found that preoccupied wives were less positive than secure wives, and dismissing wives displayed more withdrawal than did secure wives in a similar study. With respect to the provision of support, Simpson, Rholes, Oriña, and Grich (2002) also found that secure women gave more and better "contingent" support to their romantic partners, but only when their partners were distressed and requested help.

In sum, although occasional gender differences are found, individuals classified as secure on the AAI tend to display more constructive behaviors, whereas those classified as insecure (preoccupied or dismissing) exhibit more destructive behaviors in attachment-relevant situations. There is some evidence that this same pattern also holds in distressed marital couples (e.g., Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000; Wampler, Shi, Nelson, & Kimball, 2003). Viewed together, these findings suggest that insecure individuals may have a dual disadvantage when it comes to romantic relationship functioning. Not only do they carry "emotional baggage" from earlier attachment relationships, they also lack many of the skills necessary to offset or repair potentially detrimental interactions with their current attachment figures (Gottman, 1994).

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: THE CASE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Until recently, relatively little was known about how the nature and quality of early attachment experiences, measured prospectively, systematically forecast romantic relationship functioning and outcomes in adulthood. In an attempt to fill that gap, we and our colleagues have conducted longitudinal analyses with measures collected from birth forward. The research addresses whether, how, and why relationship experiences with parents and peers earlier in life are linked to the experience and expression of emotions in adult romantic relationships. The hypotheses were grounded in the organizational–developmental perspective. Previous research has explored how early attachment experiences are associated with behavioral outcomes in preschool (Kochanska, Aksan, Knaack, & Rhines, 2004; Sroufe, 1983; Troy & Sroufe, 1987; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979), middle childhood (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Sroufe, Bennett, Englund, Urban, & Shulman, 1993), adolescence (Carlson et al., 2004; Sroufe et al., 1999), and early adult romantic relationships (Collins, Hennighausen, Schmit, & Sroufe, 1997; Collins & van Dulmen, 2006). However, no research had tested structural relations between the unique relational challenges of different developmental periods (e.g., early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence) and the subsequent experience and expression of emotion in adult romantic relationships. This study, therefore, provides an important test of the core hypothesis that experiences within close relationships across development systematically predict emotional functioning in adult romantic relationships.

A Longitudinal Study of Emotion in Relationships

To test whether infant attachment experiences initiate pathways of social functioning that are eventually tied to adult romantic relationship outcomes, Simpson, Collins, Tran, and Haydon (2007) focused on participants who had been studied continuously from infancy into their mid-20s as part of the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood (Sroufe et al., 2005). Between the ages of 20 and 23, each target participant and his or her current romantic partner completed a battery of self-report relationship measures. Each couple was also videotaped while engaging in both conflict resolution and collaborative tasks.

The primary structural equation model tested was a double-mediation developmental model (see Simpson, Collins, et al., 2007). According to this model, the emotional qualities of romantic relationships in early adulthood should be predicted by a set of sequential links from attachment security status

in infancy, to competent functioning in childhood peer groups, to the establishment of high quality friendships in adolescence. The relation between early attachment security and the emotional tenor of adult romantic relationships was predicted to be indirect, with middle-childhood peer and adolescent friendship variables functioning as mediators. Individuals classified as secure in infancy should be rated as more socially competent by their grade-school teachers. Middle-childhood social competence, in turn, should predict more strongly rated secure-base behavior in the context of a close adolescent friendship. Finally, friendship security during adolescence should predict a more favorable ratio of positive to negative emotions in adult romantic relationships.

The Sample and Early Developmental Measures

Our longitudinal study (Simpson, Collins, et al., 2007) examined a subset of the full sample, namely, study participants who took part in the romantic relationship assessments in early adulthood ($n = 78$). Target participants who had been involved in a romantic relationship for at least 4 months participated with their partners when targets were between the ages of 20 and 23. The mean age of participants was 21.60 years, and the mean length of their relationships was 25.06 months. All couples were heterosexual.

Target participants and their partners were first interviewed separately, after which they completed self-report measures that assessed the functioning and perceptions of their relationship. Each couple then discussed and tried to resolve a major point of disagreement or contention in their relationship, which was followed by a collaborative problem-solving task. All interactions were videotaped and then coded by trained observers on theoretically relevant constructs.

During earlier phases of the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood, measures were collected at three critical stages of social development: (a) during early childhood (at 12 months); (b) during early elementary school (Grades 1–3); and (c) during adolescence (at age 16). Assessments were conducted at these periods of social development because each one is a unique stage at which new and different kinds of relationships are being formed and developed. The measurement approach we used is consistent with this conceptualization and with the principle of heterotypic continuity (Caspi & Roberts, 2001; Rutter & Sroufe, 2000), which posits that latent traits are manifested differently at different ages and stages of social development. Accordingly, measures of competence in relationships were selected to reflect the salient relationship issues that individuals face at each stage of development. The infancy measures obtained from target participants at 12 months assessed their attachment behaviors with their caregivers in the

Strange Situation procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The middle-childhood measures at ages 6 to 8 assessed target participants' competence at engaging peers in social interactions and their attunement to interpersonal dynamics in organized peer groups in Grades 1 through 3. The adolescence measure at age 16 assessed the nature and quality of target participants' behaviors indicative of having a secure attachment representation of a close same-sex best friend (e.g., greater disclosure, more trust, greater authenticity). The early adulthood measures at ages 20 to 23 indexed the experience and expression of emotions evident in target participants' current romantic relationships. Even though target participants' behaviors, relationships, and relationship representations were assessed by different measures in different relationships at different points of social development, the meaning and function of those behaviors and representations should be consistent across time because they tap the general coherence of social competence within each developmental stage. The measures we collected at each developmental stage were as described in the following subsections.

Infant Attachment Security

The quality of parent–infant attachment relationships was assessed at 12 months in the Strange Situation procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Raters classified each infant's attachment pattern as Secure, Avoidant, or Anxious/Resistant. We used the conventional Secure versus Insecure scoring distinction, in which Avoidant and Anxious/Resistant classifications were collapsed into a single insecure group; 61% of target participants were classified as secure at 12 months, and 39% were classified as insecure.

Peer Competence

Peer competence was assessed in Grades 1, 2, and 3. Each target participant's classroom teacher was given a one-paragraph description of a hypothetical child who was well liked and respected by peers, had mutual friendships, demonstrated understanding of other children's perspectives and ideas, and constructively engaged peers in activities. Each teacher then rank-ordered all of the children in her classroom on the basis of how closely each student matched these criteria. Teachers did not know which child in their classroom was the target (study participant). Thus, peer competence scores reflected teachers' perceptions of each target participant's percentile rank in their classes during Grades 1, 2, and 3, divided by the total number of students in each class. Each target participant received a mean peer competence percentile ranking relative to his or her classmates averaged across the three grades.

Friendship Security

Each target participant's level of friendship security was evaluated by raters at age 16 from an hour-long audiotaped interview. This measure was developed from the premise that attachment security in later relationships should be facilitated by security in earlier relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982; Thompson, 1999). Specifically, target participants were asked to describe their closest friendship, including whether and how they disclosed behaviors and feelings indicative of trust and authenticity to that person. Ratings assessed the degree to which each adolescent felt comfortable telling private details to the friend, how the friend responded to such disclosures, and the psychological closeness of the relationship. This scale, therefore, indexed the extent to which target participants felt that they could be themselves with their best friend, expected the friend to be available and supportive, and could mutually share positive and negative emotional and interpersonal experiences with him or her.

Contemporary Self-Report Measures

At ages 20 to 23, target participants and their current romantic partners both completed the following relationship-based measures.

Emotional Tone of the Relationship

The Emotional Tone Index (ETI; Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) is a self-report instrument that measures the extent to which individuals experience different emotions in their current relationship. The ETI assesses 12 positive emotions and 15 negative ones that vary in intensity from high (e.g., elated, angry) to low (e.g., content, disappointed). It has three subscales: (a) the extent to which individuals experience positive emotions (the sum of the 12 positive emotion items); (b) the extent to which they experience negative emotions (the sum of the 15 negative emotion items); and (c) the relative balance of positive versus negative emotions (i.e., the mean of the positive emotion index minus the mean of the negative emotion index). A modified version of the scale including 10 positive emotions and 14 negative emotions was used in the present study, and we focused primarily on the relative balance score.

Contemporary Relationship Observation Measures

Couples also completed a videotaped observational procedure in the lab that involved two interaction tasks: the Markman-Cox procedure (Cox, 1991) and the Ideal Couple Q-sort (Collins et al., 1999). The Markman-Cox procedure is designed to elicit conflict between relationship partners. In the first phase of the procedure, each partner identified and rated the most salient prob-

lems in the relationship. Each couple then chose the one problem that generated the most conflict. In the second phase, each couple discussed the problem and tried to reach a solution within 10 min.

After a 5-min cool-down period, each couple completed an Ideal Couple Q-sort, which is designed to elicit collaborative behaviors. Each couple was given 45 cards, each of which listed a potential quality of a hypothetical romantic couple (e.g., make sacrifices for each other, have the same interests). Each couple read each card aloud and decided which of three baskets it should be placed in: "Most like an ideal couple"; "Least like an ideal couple"; or "Middle/Unsure." Couples were told to base their decisions on their ideas of an "ideal couple" rather than on their own relationship.

Trained observers then rated each of the interactions on scales assessing the amount of Shared Positive Affect, Shared Negative Affect, Anger, Hostility, Conflict Resolution, Secure Base Behavior, and Overall Quality (see Roisman et al., 2001; Sroufe et al., 2005). Ratings were also made on three "balance scales" that indexed the extent to which the partners facilitated (a) acceptance of openness and vulnerability, (b) individual growth in the relationship, and (c) effective completion of the problem-solving task. All scales were coded at the dyadic level, meaning that each dyad received a score on each rated measure. The affect scales assessed the extent to which each couple engaged in reciprocal exchanges of positive affect, negative affect, anger, and hostility. Two composite relationship observation measures were calculated (see Roisman et al., 2001). The first measure, Romantic Relationship Process, was a composite (z -score) of Positive Affect, Secure Base, two of the Balance Scales, Conflict Resolution, and Overall Quality. The second measure, Romantic Relationship Negative Affect, was a composite of the Anger, Hostility, and Dyadic Negative Affect scales.

Primary Findings

We tested the hypothesized structural relations between the antecedent measures and the nature and quality of emotions experienced in adult romantic relationships in early adulthood (both self-reported and observer rated) using structural equation modeling. More specifically, we tested a structural model for each of the three dependent variables: (a) observer-rated adult romantic relationship process scores (from the videotaped discussions), (b) observer-rated negative affect scores (from the videotaped discussions), and (c) targets' self-reported emotion balance scores on the ETI. We also tested a model in which the three dependent variables were summed into a single composite dependent variable.

Our first model tested whether the link between infant attachment security and the adult romantic relationship process measure was mediated through

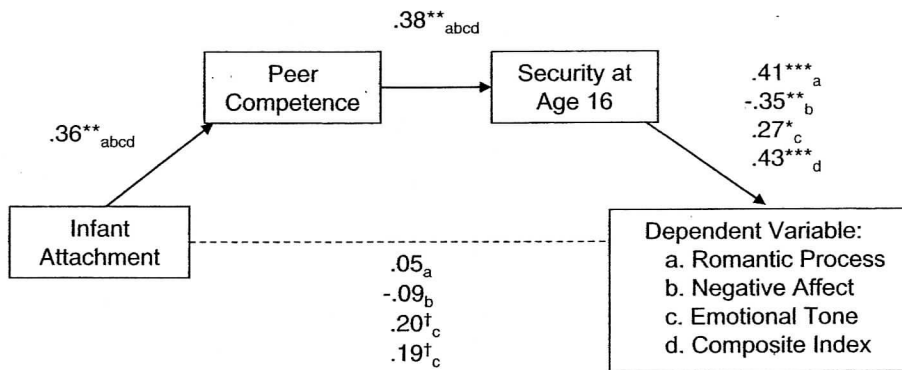


Figure 7.2. Double mediation model linking infant attachment security and early adulthood romantic relationship outcomes. Numbers represent standardized path coefficients. Four tests of the structural model were conducted, each with one of the four dependent variables: a—adult romantic relationship process, b—adult romantic negative affect, c—adult romantic emotional tone, and d—the composite score for dependent variables a, b, and c. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. From “Attachment and the Experience and Expression of Emotions in Romantic Relationships: A Developmental Perspective,” by J. A. Simpson, W. A. Collins, S. Tran, and K. C. Haydon, 2007, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, p. 362. Copyright 2007 by the American Psychological Association.

the middle-childhood peer competence composite and friendship security in adolescence. As shown in Figure 7.2 (see subscript a), this model provided a good fit. The second model tested whether the association between infant attachment security and the adult negative affect measure was mediated through peer competence and security at age 16 (Figure 7.2, subscript b). Once again, this model fit the data well. The third model tested whether the link between infant attachment security and ETI balance scores were mediated by middle-childhood peer competence and adolescent friendship security at age 16 (Figure 7.2, subscript c). Unlike the dyadic dependent variables in the first two models, the ETI balance scales were collected from both the target participant and his or her current romantic partner. If our basic hypothesis is correct, antecedent relationship experiences in an individual’s life should predict the emotional tone (i.e., positive relative to negative emotions) of his or her current romantic relationship, even when reports of emotional tone provided by the partner are statistically controlled. To control for the partner’s influence on each target participant’s emotional tone scores, we created a residualized variable in which the ETI balance scores reported by each partner were partialled from each target participant’s ETI balance scores. This residualized measure was then treated as the dependent measure in the third model. As expected, Model 3 also fit the data well.

If the hypothesized double-mediation model is robust, it should emerge when the three dependent measures are aggregated. Accordingly, Model 4

tested whether the association between infant attachment security and the composite measure of all three dependent variables—adult romantic relationship process, adult negative affect, and adult emotional tone—was mediated through peer competence and security at age 16 (Figure 7.2, subscript d). As expected, this model fit the data well.

From an organizational–developmental perspective, these findings reconfirm that adult relationship experiences are embedded in processes that begin with early caregiving, and that the qualities of early caregiving are then carried forward through important relationships across successive developmental periods (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Sroufe, 1989). This carry-forward process is complex, involving the continuous interplay of internal working models and social relationships associated with different developmental periods between infancy and adolescence (see Carlson et al., 2004). The current findings suggest that this process continues into early adulthood and partially explains the pattern of emotions that people experience and express in their adult romantic relationships.

LOOKING AHEAD: DIFFERENTIAL PREDICTIONS BASED ON DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY AND CURRENT FUNCTIONING

One of the advantages of the organizational–developmental perspective is its ability to make differential predictions about an individual's future functioning, given his or her current and past functioning with regard to developmental issues (e.g., the maintenance of a high-quality romantic relationship; Sroufe et al., 2005). Consistent with systems theory principles of equifinality and multifinality (von Bertalanffy, 1968), this perspective holds that individuals can arrive at the same outcome from different starting points. They can also arrive at different outcomes from the same starting point. In other words, individuals who have distinct developmental histories can show the same adaptation at one moment in time, but then exhibit different adaptations at later points of development (Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990). These differences should be predictable if an individual's functioning reflects his or her cumulative developmental history, rather than being fully specified by either past or current life circumstances.

Consider, for example, two individuals who are involved in different romantic relationships. Each individual reports a low positive-to-negative emotion ratio in his or her current relationship, which videotaped observations of each couple corroborate. Despite their similarities on concurrent relationship measures, these two individuals may have arrived at this common outcome via different pathways. One individual could have a secure attachment history and a good network of close, caring friends from late childhood

onward. This person has been with his or her current romantic partner for several years but was shattered by the recent discovery of infidelity by his or her partner. The couple decided to repair the relationship and is currently in therapy, but the emotional difficulties of the past few months are reflected in the couple's rather negative emotions and social interactions. In contrast, the other low-scoring individual could have an insecure attachment history and poor support networks from late childhood onward. No specific event precipitated the second individual's more negative relationship emotions and social interaction tendencies. Instead, these outcomes are driven primarily by emotional baggage from prior relationships.

When the emotional profiles of these two individuals are examined cross-sectionally, they appear almost identical to one another. Given this limited amount of information, one would expect each individual to have similar relationship trajectories and outcomes (in terms of satisfaction, conflict, stability, etc.) in the near future. However, differential predictions about future functioning emerge when current adaptation is considered in conjunction with each person's unique developmental history. For instance, assuming that the first couple's therapy is successful and lingering issues of trust are resolved, one might anticipate that the individual who has a secure attachment history will show a rebound in relationship functioning a year from now, given his or her working models and the couple's concerted efforts to repair the relationship. In contrast, the individual who has an insecure attachment history may not rebound nearly as well. An empirical test of these differential predictions would provide another key test of the hypothesis that romantic relationship outcomes are the product of both an individual's relationship history and his or her current relationship circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The organizational–developmental perspective highlights the coherence of behavior in salient relationships across time. The patterning of relationship-relevant thoughts, feelings, and actions is the common thread that connects early experiences with caregivers to later experiences with peers and eventually to romantic partners in adulthood. Although social competence is manifested differently at each relational stage, the underlying meaning of competent and incompetent behavior remains the same. As the findings of our research on the experience and expression of emotions in adult romantic relationships indicate, adult romantic outcomes are meaningfully related to relationship experiences encountered earlier in life. Indeed, in many relationships, the past may be an integral part of the present.

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