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The Code of the Street and Romantic Relationships: A dyadic analysis

Ashley B. Barr,

Department of Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, abarr@uga.edu

Ronald L. Simons, and

Department of Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, rsimons@uga.edu

Eric A. Stewart

College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, estewart2@fsu.edu

Abstract

Since its publication, Elijah Anderson's (1999) code of the street thesis has found support in studies connecting disadvantage to the internalization of street-oriented values and an associated lifestyle of violent/deviant behavior. This primary emphasis on deviance in public arenas has precluded researchers from examining the implications of the code of the street for less public arenas, like intimate relationships. In an effort to understand if and how the endorsement of the street code may infiltrate such relationships, the present study examines the associations between the code of the street and relationship satisfaction and commitment among young adults involved in heterosexual romantic relationships. Using a dyadic approach, we find that street code orientation, in general, negatively predicts satisfaction and commitment, in part due to increased relationship hostility/conflict associated with the internalization of the code. Gender differences in these associations are considered and discussed at length.

Keywords

dyadic data analysis; families; commitment; dating; gender differences; hostility

Since its publication a little over a decade ago, Elijah Anderson's *Code of the Street* (1999) has prompted much empirical inquiry, as well as heated debate. In his ethnographic account of life in inner-city Philadelphia, Anderson argues that the disproportionate rates of economic hardship, violence, and racial discrimination experienced by many African American youth lead some of these youth to reject mainstream values in favor of antisocial, street-oriented values and their associated lifestyle of violent and deviant behavior. This proposition is known as the "code of the street" thesis, and it has been successfully invoked to explain the high rates of violence among African Americans, particularly those living in inner-cities (e.g. Brezina, Agnew, Cullen, & Wright, 2004; Oliver, 2006; Stewart, Schreck, & Simons, 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2006, 2009).

Anderson (1999) describes the code of the street as "a set of prescriptions and proscriptions, or informal rules, of behavior organized around a desperate search for respect that governs *public* social relations" and "promises 'an eye for an eye', or certain 'payback' for transgressions" (p.10, emphasis added). Hence, gaining and maintaining respect and

protecting one's reputation are crucial elements of the code. Following a challenge to one's reputation or a show of disrespect, the code guarantees retaliation or revenge, sometimes in the form of lethal violence. Given the importance of the public persona embedded within the code and the implications of the code for predicting and possibly curbing inner-city violence, much of the current literature fittingly focuses on the public sphere. That is, it examines how the adoption of the code of the street influences youth's relationships and activities assumed to be outside of the home and outside of intimate relationships with others (e.g. Jones, 2008; Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2007; Stewart, et al., 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2009). Much less is known about if and how the endorsement of the street code touches people's lives in less public arenas, like within romantic relationships.

Given this gap in the literature, the present study seeks to assess how young people's endorsement of the street code may pervade even their most intimate relationships. In particular, we examine how the internalization of a street orientation relates to both relationship satisfaction and commitment among young people involved in heterosexual romantic relationships. Further, we employ a dyadic approach, assessing the link between one's own and one's partner's street code endorsement on relationship outcomes. We do so for two reasons. First, romantic partners are theoretically and empirically interdependent and, hence, are expected to be mutually influential. Second, as indicated below, the code of the street may have gendered implications that are expected to become especially salient in heterosexual intimate relationships. If a dyadic approach were not used, these implications could remain invisible.

Importantly, all of the romantic couples utilized in this study contain at least one African American partner, while the vast majority of couples are comprised of two African American partners. Such a sample is important for several reasons. First, much research over the past several decades has documented racial disparities in the frequency, quality, and stability of romantic relationships in the United States. More specifically, African Americans are less likely to marry and more likely to divorce than whites (Clayton, Mincy, & Blakenhorn, 2003; Fields & Casper, 2001; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004). In addition, African Americans tend to report lower quality, less stability, and higher rates of intimate partner violence within their romantic relationships than do whites (Broman, 2005; Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Oggins, Leber, & Veroff, 1993; Rennison & Welchans, 2000).

Second, structural factors, like marriage market conditions and economic hardships, have been shown to explain some but not all of these racial disparities (Crissey, 2005; Edin, 2000; Lundquist, 2006; McLanahan, 2009; Oppenheimer, 1988; Wilson, 1996). More recently, race-related disadvantages, such as discrimination, crime, and harsh parenting have been linked to cynical, distrusting relationship schemas and, hence, to an increased likelihood of troubled romantic relationships among African American young adults (Simons, Simons, & Lei, 2010). To the extent that race-related disadvantages also help to give rise to the internalization of the street code, as indicated by past research (Anderson, 1999; Brezina, et al., 2004; Jones, 2008; Parker & Reckdenwald, 2008; Stewart, Schreck, & Brunson, 2008; Stewart & Simons, 2006, 2009), understanding how this code directly and indirectly affects intimate relationships may also help to explain the racial disparities within these relationships.

In addition to the sample being largely African American, it is also comprised primarily of unmarried couples in early adulthood. Research suggests that the quality and characteristics of romantic relationships in this developmental stage are important factors in understanding both young people's current and future well-being and relationship functioning (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010; Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000; Demir, 2010; Kelly, Huston,

& Cate, 1985; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003; Smith, Vivian, & O'Leary, 1990; Sprecher, 2002), making such a sample particularly pertinent. Such a life-course approach (Elder, 1985; Heinz & Krüger, 2001) has helped us to understand the extent to which early romantic relationships are associated later relationship functioning (Kelly, et al., 1985; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whitton, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). Hence, greater insight into the predictors of relationship satisfaction and commitment, both of which contribute to relationship quality and stability (Stanley, Rhoades, & Whitton, 2010), in early adulthood not only contributes to our understanding of young people's current well-being but also might allow for an even deeper understanding of well-being and relationship functioning in later life.

The Code of the Street and Romantic Relationships

Using the terminology of the residents in his ethnographic research, Anderson (1999) distinguishes between “decent” and “street” families and also between decent and street-oriented individuals (pp. 32–33). Anderson argues that, although most of the residents in the neighborhoods that he studied know the street code and even enact it in public when necessary, the majority of inner-city residents have not internalized the code. Rather, these “decent” individuals and families are committed to conventional values like hard work and educational achievement and simply endorse the code in public as a form of self-defense.

“Street” individuals and families, on the other hand, have internalized the code as a way of life, as a culture that stands in direct opposition to mainstream values. As summarized by Jimerson and Oware (2006), “decent people frequently engage in role-playing” while “people who acquire a hardcore street orientation often suffer from role engulfment” (p. 27). In writing about such role engulfment, Anderson (1999) notes that street-oriented youth “more fully believe in the code and judge themselves and others according to its values” (p. 45). Such internalization of the code and its emphasis on respect, reputation, and retaliation, often above anything else (Anderson), should not be expected to dissipate in the context of romantic relationships. Because “decent” people enact the code only when deemed necessary and have seemingly not internalized its lessons into a cognitive schema, the code should be less relevant to the internal dynamics of their intimate relationships than it is for street-oriented people. Hence, it is the internalization of the code as a way of life that we intend to capture in the measure of street orientation utilized in this study, as it is such an internalization, not a mere acknowledgement of the code, that is expected to have repercussions for romantic relationships.

Placing such strong emphasis on respect and promising retribution in the presence of any transgression may lead the relationships of street-oriented youth to be rife with hostility, conflict, and mistrust. For instance, those who are heavily invested in the code of the street may be more likely to perceive common complaints from their partners as signs of disrespect. Because the code dictates that such signs of disrespect must not go unpunished, common grievances between partners may quickly escalate into heated conflicts. Although we did not find any other study thus far that examined directly the code of the street and its implications for romantic relationships, research concerned with hostile attribution bias and similar cognitive schemas has demonstrated strong, positive associations between such schemas and conflict/aggression (Gilles & Clemence, 2007; Homant & Kennedy, 2003; Hudley & Friday, 1996; Simons, et al., 2010). The code of the street differs from such schemas in that respect, or lack thereof, is of primary concern, but just as hostile attribution bias makes one attribute hostile intentions to benevolent behaviors, orientation to the code of the street should affect people's perceptions of and responses to the world and, hence, may lead one to perceive disrespect where there is none, leading street-committed people to retaliate with hostility and disrespect.

Although some research suggests that conflict in and of itself is not determinant of relationship outcomes (e.g. Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), research has consistently linked persistent negative or hostile/disrespectful interactions to both decreased relationship satisfaction and commitment (e.g. Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1999; Ballard-Reisch, Weigel, & Zaguidouline, 1999; Gill, Christensen, & Fincham, 1999; Givertz & Segrin, 2005; Panayiotou, 2005; Sanford, 2003). Given this well-established link, it is expected that the adoption of the street code by oneself or one's partner will predict lower relationship satisfaction and commitment, in part due to its anticipated positive association with relationship hostility. Formally, these hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1.1: One's own street code orientation will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment for both men and women.

Hypothesis 1.2: Partner's street code orientation will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment for both men and women.

Hypothesis 1.3: These relationships will be at least partially explained by the increase in relationship hostility/conflict that is expected to pervade the relationships of street-oriented persons.

Gender, the Street Code, and Romantic Relationships

In contrast to the gender-neutral effects of the street code outlined above, the internalization of the code has been hypothesized to differ significantly for men and women. Given this supposedly gendered internalization, the association between street code orientation and relationship outcomes may differ for men and women in important ways. This gendering of the code plausibly complicates the simple pathway from street-orientation to increased relationship hostility to decreased satisfaction and commitment outlined above.

The Code of Street and Masculinity

As noted by Anderson (1999) and several others (e.g. Collins, 2004; Jones, 2008; Oliver, 2006), the street code appears to be firmly tied up with notions of masculinity and manhood, so much so that Anderson writes that "manhood and survival are often two sides of the same coin" (p. 91). In other words, for young men, a show of disrespect stakes not simply their reputation but their reputation as men. Jimerson and Oware's (2006) recent ethnography of black male basketball players supports the rigid association between the street code and masculine identity, as it shows how young black men often invoke the code as a means of doing gender (see West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Although the street code is largely associated with young men, Anderson (1999) actually notes that both men and women have a shared appreciation for the code. For instance, when discussing fights among teenage girls, he writes that "In many ways, their fights are not unlike those of the boys. Their goal is often the same—to gain respect, to be recognized as capable of setting and maintaining a certain standard" (Anderson, p. 63). Jones (2008) corroborates Anderson's claims by revealing "an appreciation of 'the code of the street' that cuts across gender lines" (p. 69). What seems to be gendered about the code, however, is that, even for women, it continues to be associated with masculinity. That is, for young women, a show of disrespect does not threaten their femininity, just as the outcome of a fight does not stake their identity *as women*. Jones (2008) summarizes this notion when she states that:

In contrast to young men's concern with public and potentially life-threatening displays of 'manhood', the young women in this study typically considered the use of physical aggression or violence as a means to an end, rather than as a defining characteristic of being a woman (p. 74).

Furthermore, despite their tough demeanor and their willingness to engage in fights, the young women Jones interviewed “embraced popular notions of femininity, ‘skirts’ and all” and often believed “escalating the negotiation of conflict to the use of lethal violence was senseless” (pp. 75–77). Hence, according to Jones’ work, women’s commitment to the code of the street appears to be limited by hegemonic gender projects. That is, hegemonic associations of femininity and womanhood with passivity, nurturance, and domesticity may restrict the degree to which young women internalize the code and/or enact its script (for an alternative argument linking the code of the street to both masculinity and femininity, see Ness, 2010).

According to this work, then, the effect of the code of the street on relationship satisfaction and commitment may operate differently for young men and women. In particular, because a show of disrespect seemingly challenges men’s gender identities more so than it does those of women (Anderson, 1999; Jimerson & Oware, 2006; Jones, 2008; Oliver, 2006), young men who are deeply committed to the code of the street may perceive small transgressions not only as a sign of disrespect but also as a threat to their masculinity. Hence, men who have deeply internalized the street code may be more vigilant than women when it comes to perceiving and responding to disrespect. Further, the degree to which women internalize the street code and respond to situations via its script may be limited by hegemonic notions of femininity. To the extent that men’s hypervigilance for detecting and avenging a show of disrespect holds true, the associations between street orientation and relationship outcomes would be much stronger for men than for women. Formally, this research linking the code of the street to the construction and performance of masculinity suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2.1: Street code orientation will be more negatively associated with one’s own satisfaction and commitment for men than it is for women.

Hypothesis 2.2: Likewise, the positive association of street code on one’s own relationship hostility will be stronger for men than for women.

“The Player” Role as Embedded within the Code

The code of the street may have a particularly gendered association with relationship commitment due to the role of “the player” that has been hypothesized to be embedded within the code (Anderson, 1999). As noted by Oliver (2006), restricted opportunities to enhance masculine identity through traditional routes (e.g. providing for oneself and one’s family) “has served as a catalyst for some Black men to define and claim manhood in terms of sexual conquest and exploitation of women” (p. 929). In the streets, then, “a young man’s primary goal is thus to find as many willing females as possible. The more ‘pussy’ he gets, the more esteem accrues to him” (Anderson, 1999, p.150). Because the issue of respect is central to the code of the street and because a young man’s successful sexual conquests gain him respect, “the player of women” has been argued to be an implicit masculine role ingrained within the street code. If this is the case, the gendering of the code in this manner provides another means by which men’s street code orientation would be more strongly associated with relationship outcomes, particularly commitment, than would be women’s (as expressed in Hypothesis 2.1 above). Further, if the “player” role is indeed a particularly masculine role *embedded* within the code of street, this relationship should remain intact when relationship hostility is taken into account.

Hypothesis 2.3: For men only, the negative association between street orientation and commitment will remain significant when hostility is considered in the model.

Because of the potentially gendered nature of the street code and its supposed association with masculinity, men’s and women’s relationship satisfaction and commitment may not

only be differentially related their own internalization of the code but may also be differentially related to their partner's level of street code endorsement. For instance, young women's full commitment to the code of the street may be perceived by some men as breaking conventional gender roles and as impinging upon their traditional role as the provider and defender, thus leading to greater perceived threat, higher hostility, and lower relationship quality for men involved with street-oriented women. Because men's commitment to the street code, however, may demonstrate their toughness and their ability to provide for and protect their family, it may enhance their status as men and, ultimately, may attract, satisfy, and retain female mates.

Such arguments are consistent with those in the evolutionary psychology literature, which argues that, for men, risk-taking behavior and displays of toughness are linked to status, as such behaviors demonstrate a man's fitness and his overall ability to provide and protect his family (Buss, 1994, 1999). This perspective finds support in research by Rebellon and Manasse (2004), who show that risk-taking, as measured by delinquency, significantly predicts young men's romantic involvement. Hence, to the degree that women, but not men, are attracted to and value toughness and defensiveness in a mate, a partner's influence may differ by gender. In fact, if this perspective is correct we should expect to see divergent effects for men and women. More specifically, because the evolutionary psychology tradition argues that women but not men have evolved a preference for tough, defensive romantic partners, it follows that men may find street-oriented partners undesirable, threatening, and/or distressing, ultimately leading to higher hostility and lower satisfaction and commitment for men involved with such women. On the contrary, women may find street-oriented men desirable and nonthreatening and, hence, should not be expected to respond antagonistically to a street-oriented partner. In fact, men's street code orientation should be attractive and, hence, should enhance women's relationship satisfaction and commitment. Stated more formally, the notion of gender differences in evolved mate preferences suggests the following relationships:

Hypothesis 3.1: Gender will moderate a partner's effect of street code orientation on relationship satisfaction and commitment such that men's street code orientation will positively predict women's relationship satisfaction and commitment and women's street code orientation will negatively predict men's relationship satisfaction and commitment.

Hypothesis 3.2: Gender will moderate the partner effect of street code orientation on relationship hostility such that men's street code orientation will negatively predict women's relationship hostility and women's street code orientation will positively predict men's relationship hostility.

The Code of the Street and Increased Risk

Contrary to the predictions based on supposedly evolved gender differences in mate preferences, some sociological research lends itself to divergent predictions with regard to gendered partner effects of the street code on relationship outcomes. Work by Oliver (1998; 2006), Stewart et al., (2006), and Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995), suggests that the risks associated with endorsing and abiding by the code of the street may render street-oriented partners, particularly street-oriented men, undesirable. In describing the masculine roles prescribed by the street code, Oliver (2006) notes that "the tough guy/gangsta" persona adopted by some young men in the streets requires that they "convey through symbolic (e.g. demeanor and cool poses) and overt displays (e.g. tough talk, threats, actual acts of violence) of toughness that [they are] willing to resort to violence as a means of resolving disputes" (p. 928). Further, he and others argue that such displays of toughness are likely to be challenged

by others who are also attempting to attain or maintain respect, resulting in persistent threats to young men's physical safety (Anderson, 1999; Oliver, 1998).

Stewart et al., (2006) provide support for this notion that the adoption of the code of the street actually increases the risk of violent victimization among young people. Further, Oliver (2006) argues that the endorsement of the street code renders young men "less desirable as husbands and long-term intimate partners and also contributes to high rates of family and relationship disruption" (pp. 931–932), particularly through the increased risk of incarceration (Mauer, 1999), violent victimization, and unemployment (Wilson, 1996) that often go hand-in-hand with participation in street-related activities. In fact, men's participation in street-related activities has been linked to negative perceptions on the part of Black women (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995).

Hence, the sociological research cited here suggests, in general, that endorsement of the street code may place one at an increased risk of falling victim to violence, crime, incarceration, and joblessness, thus potentially reducing a romantic partner's satisfaction and commitment to the relationship. If this is the case, one should expect a positive association between a partner's street code and one's own hostility and a negative association between a partner's street code and one's own satisfaction and commitment for both men and women. Given men's increased participation in violence and their greater willingness and involvement in severe or lethal violence (Almgren, Guest, Immerwahr, & Spittel, 1998; Archer, 2004; Gartner, 1990; Kellermann & Mercy, 1992; Pettit & Western, 2004), however, women may be especially hostile, dissatisfied, and uncommitted if their partner is highly devoted to the code of the street. Stated more simply:

Hypothesis 4.1: A partner's endorsement of the street code will positively predict one's own hostility and will negatively predict one's own commitment and satisfaction for both men and women, as previously proposed, but these partner effects will be stronger for women than for men.

Data and Methods

Sample

We evaluate the above hypotheses using data from wave 5 of the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS), an ongoing, longitudinal research project which examines the social, psychological, and contextual risk and protective factors associated with African American families' health and wellbeing (see Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills, & Brody, 2004; Simons, et al., 2002 for a detailed description of sampling procedures). In brief, a total of 867 African American families from Iowa and Georgia participated in the first wave of data collection in 1997. At the time of recruitment, each family had a child who was in the 5th grade in the public school system. Follow-up interviews with these children and their families were conducted every 2–3 years thereafter.

A total of 689 target youth (79.5% of the original sample) completed surveys at wave 5 of data collection. By this time, the participants no longer resided in only Georgia or Iowa but were dispersed across 23 states. Also during the fifth wave of data collection, the romantic partners of those youth who were involved in an ongoing romantic relationship were invited to participate in the study. Of the 377 respondents who were at least dating one person on a regular basis, 237 of their romantic partners participated in the study^{1, 2}. Given their potentially unique characteristics and their minority status, the same-sex couples ($n = 7$; all female) were dropped from the sample. Furthermore, those couples for which data was incomplete ($n = 12$) were also dropped from the analyses. Hence, the present paper focuses upon the subset of respondents who were involved in ongoing heterosexual relationships and whose partners provided complete data. The final sample consists of 436 individuals, or 218

heterosexual dyads. Although the original FACHS data consists solely of African American youth, the romantic partners of these youth were not required to be African American in order to participate in the study. Hence, all couples in the sample are comprised of at least one African American partner, while the vast majority most (73%) are comprised of two.

Dependent Variables

Relationship satisfaction—Respondents answered 3 questions regarding their current level of satisfaction in their relationship with their romantic partner. The questions were as follows: “How well do you and your romantic partner get along compared to most couples?,” “How happy are you, all thing considered, with your relationship?,” and “All in all, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” Items were standardized prior to forming the index, which was coded so that higher values indicate higher levels of satisfaction. Cronbach’s alpha was .81 for women and .69 for men.

Relationship commitment—To assess the degree to which the respondents were committed to their romantic relationships, respondents were asked “How committed are you to your relationship with your romantic partner?” Responses ranged from (1) Extremely committed to (5) Not at all committed. Because so few respondents indicated that they were “not very” or “not at all” committed, the variable was collapsed into a three-level ordinal variable. Further, this variable was reverse coded so that higher values indicate higher levels of commitment.

Mediating Variables

Female/Male hostility—Male and female hostility was measured using an 8-item relationship hostility index (Donnellan, Assad, Robins, & Conger, 2007). Both partners of each dyad were asked a series of questions concerning the degree to which their partner displayed hostility (e.g. criticize, insult/swear, hit) toward them during the past month and the degree to which they displayed hostility toward their partner. Responses ranged from “Never” (1) to “Always” (7). Cronbach’s alpha was .74 for women’s report of male hostility, .75 for men’s report of female hostility, .73 for women’s report of their own hostility, and .66 for men’s report of their own hostility. Past research has shown measures of one’s own and one’s partner’s hostile behavior to be highly correlated and to be significantly associated with observer ratings of couple interactions (Cui, Lorenz, Conger, Melby, & Bryant, 2005). Nevertheless, we utilize both partners’ reports of their own and their partner’s hostility to minimize perceptual bias.

Primary Independent Variable

Endorsement of the street code—Internalization of the street code was assessed via a 6-item index (Stewart, et al., 2006) that assessed the degree to which respondents placed importance on a tough identity and the acquisition and maintenance of respect and the degree to which they believed violent retaliation was in order when they were disrespected.

¹All respondents were asked, “What best describes your current relationship status?” Possible responses included (1) I am not dating or seeing anyone right now, (2) I date, but do not have a steady, romantic relationship with one person, (3) I date one person on a regular basis but can still see other people, (4) I am in a steady, committed relationship but not engaged, (5) I am engaged to be married (and don’t live with my fiancé), (6) I live with my romantic partner but we do not currently have plans to marry, (7) I live with my romantic partner and we are engaged to marry, (8) I am married. The partners of respondents who specified any but the first two response categories and who also indicated that they were romantically involved with the target respondent were invited to participate in the study.

²There is little evidence of selection bias when comparing those respondents who had participating romantic partners to those who did not. These groups did not differ significantly with regards to age, education, work status, self-esteem, criminal involvement, or religious involvement. Further, as discussed elsewhere (Simons, Simons, and Lei 2010) there has been little evidence of selective attrition across the 5 waves of the study.

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements like: “It is important to let others know that if they do something wrong to you, you will make them pay for it” and “Being viewed as tough and aggressive is important for gaining respect.” Cronbach’s alpha for the index was 0.82 for women and .77 for men. Although this measure of the code of the street may not tap all of the intricacies identified by Anderson (1999), we believe it captures the core attitudinal component of the street code. Further, this index, or an expansion of it, has been used in numerous papers and has been shown to have strong reliability and validity (e.g. Stewart, et al., 2006; Stewart & Simons, 2006, 2009). As mentioned earlier, this measure of street-orientation is designed to assess internalization of the street code as a way of life; hence, street-oriented young people are expected to exhibit higher scores than “decent” people who merely enact the code when deemed necessary and have not internalized its mandates.

Control Variables

Several variables were controlled for in all of the analyses that follow. Level-1 controls included age (in years), highest level of education completed (in years), religious involvement, criminal involvement, and self-reported neighborhood disorder³. Level-2 controls included whether or not the couple has a child (1 = yes), the length of the relationship (in years), whether or not the couple is interracial (1 = yes), and relationship status, which ranged from dating to married. All level-1 control variables included reports from both partners, while the level-2 controls were equivalent across dyad partners.

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

Most studies of romantic relationships focus on the effect of one’s own characteristics on one’s own behavior/outcomes. This effect is termed an *actor effect*, and typically it is estimated for only one member of a dyad. For instance, Simons et al., (2010) assess the relationships between cumulative disadvantage, cognitive schemas, views of marriage, and relationship outcomes among a sample of African American youth involved in exclusive romantic relationships. Even when couple-level data are available, researchers tend to run separate analyses for each member of the dyad (e.g. Taft et al. 2006). Although such analyses are insightful, they often do not consider and/or cannot account for the possibility that each person’s outcome is affected not only by his/her own characteristics but also by those of his/her partner (such an effect is termed a *partner effect*). To the extent that partner effects have been considered in the literature, they have typically been examined with individual-level data and, hence, have failed to account for the interdependence between the partners’ characteristics and/or outcomes (e.g. Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002).

More recently, however, researchers have begun to utilize the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) developed by Kenny and his colleagues (Campbell & Kashy, 2002; Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kashy & Kenny, 1999; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) to analyze dyadic data. The APIM assumes that the data from two members of a dyad are not independent and, hence, treats the couple and not the individual as the unit of analysis. Doing so allows for the simultaneous estimation of actor and partner effects, a necessity for “identifying truly relational phenomena” (Kenny, et al., 2006, p.147). The basic APIM is depicted in Figure 1 below. In this figure, a_w and a_m represent the actor effects for women and men, respectively. Paths p_{mw} and p_{wm} represent the partner effects, or the effect of

³Religious involvement was measured via a 2-item index and assessed how often in the past month respondents attended religion-related events (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$ for women and .62 for men). Criminal involvement was a count of the number of criminal activities (e.g. use a weapon on someone, steal, break into a building/house, etc.) the respondent engaged in during the past year. Finally, neighborhood disorder was measured via a 6-item index assessing how often in the past year certain criminal activities (e.g. sexual assault, robbery, selling of illegal drugs) occurred in the respondents’ neighborhoods (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$ for women and .85 for men).

women's street code on men's outcome and men's street code on women's outcome, respectively.

Plan of Analysis

The APIM can be used for both distinguishable (e.g. heterosexual partners; parent and child) and indistinguishable dyads (e.g. same-sex roommates or classmates), and can be estimated via structural equation modeling, multilevel modeling, or pooled regression, the latter of which is not recommended due to the assumption of homogeneity of variance across dyad members that must be made (Kenny, et al., 2006). The empirical distinguishability of dyad members by gender was established via the "omnibus test of distinguishability," which is identical to the I-SAT (Kenny, et al., 2006, pp.129–130). The results of this test ($\chi^2(30) = 103.83, p < .001$) suggest that the dyad members in the current sample can indeed be distinguished statistically, and hence, the present study utilized the structural equation modeling approach (via MPlus Version 6; Muthen and Muthen 1998–2010), which allows for a simplistic presentation of actor and partner effects and of gender differences in such effects.

Hypotheses concerning the direct association between street code endorsement and relationship outcomes were tested via the classic Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) discussed above. To test hypotheses concerning the role of relationship hostility in mediating these direct effects, we employed an extended version of the APIM known as the Actor-Partner Mediator Model (see Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007; Ledermann & Bodenmann, 2006). The Actor-Partner Mediator Model (APMeM), like its predecessor, takes into account the interdependence between members of a dyad but also allows for the analysis of mediator effects. Figure 2 diagrams the APMeM, including the direct effects (indicated by dotted lines) from the exogenous (independent) variables to the endogenous (dependent) variables that are expected to be mediated.

If left completely unconstrained, both the APIM and the APMeM are fully saturated models with zero degrees of freedom and, hence, no measures of model fit. For the APMeM, as Bodenmann, Ledermann, and Bradbury (2007) describe, the direct partner effects are typically assumed to be mediated and are excluded from the model in order to free up two *df* and obtain model fit statistics. The hypotheses in the present study concern *the degree to which* both the direct actor effects *and* the direct partner effects are mediated by relationship hostility, thus these direct paths, if significant in the basic APIM, are maintained in the APMeM until proven no longer significant. Degrees of freedom and model fit statistics in the mediator model are instead obtained by excluding the direct paths that proved nonsignificant in the basic APIM. This model is further reduced to only its empirically significant paths in the presentation of results. Chi-square comparisons between full and reduced models are noted where appropriate.

In order to simplify the models presented while maintaining theoretical and statistical integrity, the effects of the control variables were partialled out of the data. Hence, partial covariances were used to test the hypotheses⁴. As noted by Fletcher, Selgrade, and Germano (2006), the differences between using partial covariances and explicitly modeling covariates in structural equation models are negligible. Furthermore, in all of the analyses that follow,

⁴Although relationship commitment was an ordinal-level variable, it was treated in all analyses as continuous for two reasons. First, in MPlus6, analyses with ordinal dependent variables require the use of raw data in order to calculate standard errors and significance values. Maintaining the ordinal properties of the variable, then, would have precluded the use of a partial covariance matrix. Second, an ordinal analysis was conducted with the partial covariance matrix, and, although lacking significance estimates, it produced coefficients similar in magnitude and direction to those produced in the analyses used here. Hence, we opted for the more parsimonious results and treat commitment as a continuous outcome.

continuous predictors are centered at their grand mean, as is suggested by Kenny et al., (2006), and robust standard errors are used to adjust for slight deviations from normality. For both the APIM and the APM_eM that follow, differences between actor and partner effects by gender were examined via Wald tests of parameter constraints⁵. Significant gender differences in actor and partner parameters are noted where appropriate.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for all variables (including controls) used in subsequent analyses. In Table 1, individual-level variables are separated by respondent gender, and significant gender differences are indicated where appropriate. Respondents reported an average relationship length of 2.8 years, and the most common relationship status was an exclusive dating relationship (43%). On average, the respondents in the sample were in their early twenties, but the young men in the sample were roughly 2 years older than their female partners. Men also reported significantly lower levels of educational attainment, religious attendance, and relationship commitment but higher levels of criminal involvement and neighborhood disorder than did their female counterparts. In addition, on average, men and women tended to disagree somewhat on the level of female hostility in their relationships, as men reported significantly higher levels of female hostility than did women, although their reports were moderately positively correlated ($r = .31$). Men's and women's reports of male hostility ($r = .33$) and of relationship satisfaction ($r = .39$) did not significantly differ from one another.

Also of note are the descriptive statistics for independent variable, street code endorsement. On average, both men and women tended not to have deeply internalized the code, as it is captured here. That is, with a range of 5 to 20, women and men reported an average endorsement of 10.09 and 11.92, respectively. This represents a significant gender difference, but both means are on the lower end of the street code scale. Further, the standard deviations (2.95 and 3.11 for women and men, respectively) are substantial. These descriptive results suggest within-group variation among African Americans with regard to their street orientation and support our expectation that the measure utilized here captures the internalization of the code that is expected of "street" but not "decent" individuals.

Table 1 also provides the intercorrelations among the study variables. Several associations are noteworthy. First, although relationship satisfaction is significantly and positively associated with relationship commitment for both men and women, satisfaction and commitment seem to have distinct relationships with other variables. For instance, for both men and women, the associations between hostility and commitment tend to be much lower than those between hostility and satisfaction. These unique relationships validate the decision to include satisfaction and commitment in the same model but to examine these outcomes as distinct features of a relationship and not as coherent indicators of relationship quality. Second, there are several significant associations between control variables and the variables explicitly modeled in the study. Hence, the decision to partial out their effects is validated.

⁵Equality of parameters was tested via MPlus with the *MODEL TEST* command. This command provides a Wald Test of Parameter Constraints and tests the null hypothesis that two parameters are equal to one another (e.g. women's actor effect of street code on satisfaction = men's actor effect of street code on satisfaction).

Street Code and Relationship Outcomes: Direct Effects

In Table 2, the direct effects of street code orientation on relationship satisfaction and commitment are shown via the classic APIM, which has been reduced to its significant paths. To evaluate the fit of this reduced model and of the APM_eM to follow, we used the criteria proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), who suggest a cutoff of $>.95$ for the comparative fit index (CFI) and $<.06$ for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). As indicated by the CFI, RMSEA, and chi-square statistics shown in Table 2, the reduced model fits the data well.

In terms of the direct effects of street code orientation on relationship outcomes, Table 2 is supportive of Hypothesis 1.1 in that the actor effects relating street code to both satisfaction and commitment are statistically significant and are negative in direction for both men and women. Further, contrary to Hypothesis 2.1, which suggests stronger actor effects for men due to the supposed association of the street code with masculinity, Wald tests revealed that these actor effects do not differ significantly by gender ($p > .10$ for both contrasts). Hence, for both men and women, one's own internalization of the street code is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction and commitment. With specific regard to commitment, these gender-neutral findings challenge the notion that the "player" role is a uniquely masculine script embedded within the code of the street, as the relationship commitment of women and men is not differentially associated with their endorsement of the street code.

Whereas all of the actor effects in Table 2 are statistically significant, only two out of the four partner effects reach statistical significance. More specifically, female's street code orientation is significantly and negatively related to male's commitment but not satisfaction, whereas male's street code orientation is significantly and negatively related to female's satisfaction but not commitment. These findings partially support the gender-neutral hypothesis (Hypothesis 1.2) in that the associations between partner's street code and relationship outcomes are negative for both men and women, but they suggest gendered effects in terms of which relationship outcome is affected by a partner's endorsement of the code. Further, the findings for commitment partially support the gendered hypothesis (Hypothesis 3.1) drawn from evolutionary psychology in that men seem especially uncommitted to street-oriented women. However, the finding that women appear less satisfied with street-oriented men calls into question women's supposedly evolved attraction to and preference for tough, defensive male partners.

Street Code and Relationship Outcomes: Mediating Role of Hostility

Table 3 displays the results for the reduced APM_eM with male and female street code orientation as the independent variables, male and female hostility (reported by both partners) as mediating variables, and relationship outcomes as endogenous variables⁶. For those who prefer a visual representation of these results, Figure 3 displays the reduced path analysis model. In the APM_eM with four outcome variables and four mediating variables considered here, there are sixteen potential indirect pathways from street code to satisfaction and from street code to commitment, resulting in a total of thirty-two possible mediating paths. With good model fit, the assumption of complete mediation is supported if the direct effects between street code and the endogenous variables are no longer significant, as they were in the classic APIM with no mediators. Partial mediation can be inferred if these direct effects remain significant in the face of significant indirect effects, which are evaluated via the z statistic. A direct test of the size and significance of all indirect effects is available via

⁶All direct paths that were significant in the basic APIM and all mediating paths were included in the APM_eM. For presentation in Table 3, the model was reduced to only its significant paths. Chi-square difference test revealed that the removal of nonsignificant paths ($p > .20$ for all) did not significantly decrease model fit (χ^2 diff = 8.545, $df = 14$, *ns*).

MPlus 6 (Muthen and Muthen 1998–1010). The sum of indirect effects for the reduced model is displayed in the bottom portion of Table 3.

Association between street code and relationship hostility—As shown in Table 3, the actor effects relating street code orientation to relationship hostility are generally statistically significant. The only exception is that women's street code is not associated with men's report of female hostility; it is, however, positively associated with women's report of female hostility. Men's street code orientation is significantly and positively associated with both partners' reports of male hostility. Interestingly, in terms of partner effects, men's street code orientation is significantly and positively associated with women's relationship hostility (as reported by both partners), but women's street code orientation is not significantly associated with men's relationship hostility. Hence, women's endorsement of the street code predicts only women's report of their own hostility and fails to predict men's hostility or men's perception of female hostility. Male's endorsement of the street code consistently and significantly predicts both partners' increased hostility, no matter which partner does the reporting.

These findings support two ideas. First, they partially support Hypothesis 2.2 and Hypothesis 4.1 in suggesting that more street-oriented men might be particularly vigilant and responsive to signs of disrespect and, hence, may not only be more hostile but may also generate hostility in their female partners (perhaps by overreacting to their partner's complaints). Second, they challenge the evolutionary argument expressed in Hypothesis 3.2 that women prefer street-oriented men and therefore would be less hostile toward them. Instead, the results suggest that men's endorsement of the street code is uniquely associated with women's increased hostility, which supports the notion that street oriented partners are particularly stressful for women but not for men.

Association between relationship hostility and relationship outcomes—

Because there are four dependent variables in the current model, there are sixteen potentially significant paths (8 actor and 8 partner effects) from relationship hostility to relationship outcomes. As the reduced results in Table 3 indicate, all but two of the actor effects in the model are statistically significant in the logical direction. For both men and women, one's own relationship hostility, as reported by both partners, is associated with decreased satisfaction. For commitment, however, these actor effects are only significant when respondents reported about their own behavior. In other words, for instance, men's report of women's hostility was not significantly associated with women's commitment, but women's report of their own hostility was significantly and positively associated with women's commitment. Of the significant paths, Wald tests indicated no significant gender differences ($p > .10$ for all contrasts).

An examination of the partner effects in Table 3 reveals that only two such effects reached statistical significance. More specifically, for both men and women, perceived partner hostility is significantly and negatively associated with satisfaction. Wald tests indicated that this partner effect differs significantly for men and women in that it is much stronger for women ($p < .05$). The associations between partner hostility and commitment, however, are not significant for either men or women.

Association between street code orientation and relationship satisfaction—As we showed in the basic APIM analysis (Table 2), both actor effects from street code to relationship satisfaction were statistically significant, but one partner effect ($X_W \rightarrow Y_M$) failed to reach statistical significance. The direct effects from street code to relationship satisfaction in the APMEM results shown in Table 3 reveal the extent to which the significant relationships found in the basic model have been mediated by relationship

hostility⁷. Given that women's street code orientation significantly predicted only one of the four mediating variables, the relationship between women's endorsement of the street code and women's satisfaction remains statistically significant in the reduced model presented in Table 3. This suggests that relationship hostility plays little role in explaining the association between women's street code orientation and women's satisfaction. In fact, as indicated by the sum of indirect effects in this same table, the actor effect from women's street code endorsement to women's relationship satisfaction was only marginally mediated by the relationship hostility measures ($IE = -.022, p < .10$). For men, however, the actor effect from street code to satisfaction has been completely mediated, as indicated by a nonsignificant direct effect and a highly significant sum of indirect effects in Table 3 ($IE = -.102, p < .001$). These findings offer partial support for Hypothesis 1.3 in that relationship hostility explains the negative association between street code endorsement and relationship satisfaction, but it does so only for men.

Turning now to partner effects, the results indicate that the significant effect of men's street code orientation on women's satisfaction that was found in the basic APIM analysis (Table 2) has been completely mediated by relationship hostility. As shown in Table 3, the association between men's street code orientation and women's satisfaction is no longer statistically significant, and the mediating role of hostility is highly significant (sum of indirect effects = $-.104, p < .01$). This finding supports the notion that women's dissatisfaction with more street-oriented partners is associated with the greater degree of relationship hostility that accompanies such partners (Hypothesis 1.3). Because the relationship between women's street code orientation and men's satisfaction did not reach statistical significance in the basic APIM, a discussion of indirect effects in the APMcM is irrelevant, as there is no partner effect to be mediated.

Association between street code orientation and relationship commitment—

As we showed in the basic APIM analysis, all actor effects from street code to relationship commitment were statistically significant. One partner effect ($X_M \rightarrow Y_W$), however, failed to reach statistical significance. As with satisfaction, the direct effects from street code to relationship commitment in the APMcM results shown in Table 3 reveal the extent to which the significant relationships found in the basic model have been mediated by relationship hostility. Again, given that women's street code orientation predicted only one of the four relationship hostility measures, the relationship between women's endorsement of the street code and women's commitment has been only marginally mediated by relationship hostility ($IE = -.009, p < .10$). Hence, this relationship remains statistically significant in the model, as relationship hostility does not appear to play a major role in explaining the association between women's street code orientation and women's commitment. For men, however, the actor effect from street code to commitment has reduced to nonsignificance after taking into account relationship hostility. The sum of indirect effects, as shown in the bottom portion of Table 3, indicates that the relationship hostility measures did indeed explain a significant portion of this actor effect ($IE = -.019, p < .01$). These findings fail to support Hypothesis 2.3 and the notion of a strictly masculine "player" role embedded within the code, as the relationship between the code of the street and decreased commitment is explained by relationship hostility.

As only the partner path of women's street code endorsement on men's commitment was statistically significant in the basic APIM, only this effect is discussed with regard to mediation. Table 3 reveals that, because women's street code orientation has little effect on

⁷The results presented in Table 3 represent unstandardized coefficients, following the suggestion of Ackerman, Donnellan, and Kashy (2010). The indirect effects cannot be calculated simply by summing the coefficients from all the $X \rightarrow M$ paths and all the $M \rightarrow Y$ paths because such paths are not on the same metric.

relationship hostility, the partner effect has not been mediated. Hence, contrary to Hypothesis 1.3, the negative association between women's street code and men's commitment is not accounted for by increased relationship hostility.

Discussion

Gender, the Code of the Street, and Romantic Relationships

The results of this study suggest a much more nuanced relationship between endorsement of the code of the street and relationship outcomes than was predicted by purely a gender-neutral approach or a gender-specific approach, the latter of which was informed by both evolutionary psychology and sociological insights. Hypotheses predicting a gender-neutral approach suggested parallel results for men and women with respect to all of the relationships examined. Although this was the case for many relationships, others were gendered in their effects and, hence, in their implications.

Actor Effects—The results of the basic APIM, without the presence of mediators, appear to support a gender-neutral approach, at least with respect to the actor effects under investigation. That is, both men's and women's street code orientation negatively predicted both relationship satisfaction and commitment to similar degrees. These findings call into question the idea put forth by Anderson (1999) and others (Jimerson & Oware, 2006; Jones, 2008; Oliver, 2006) that, although girls and women know and enact the code, it is generally tied up with notions of masculinity and manhood and, hence, should be more fundamental in the lives and relationships of men. The mediator model, however, provides some support for this gendered perspective, as men's street code orientation significantly predicted men's hostility and thus accounted for the relationship between men's street code and their decreased satisfaction, while women's did not. Therefore, although the basic association between street code and satisfaction was similar for men and women, there appears to be different processes at work. More street-oriented men were less satisfied than less street-oriented peers particularly because their relationships were rife with hostility, while hostility did not explain the dissatisfaction of street-oriented women. These findings support Jones' (2008) and Ness's (2010) arguments in disputing the notion that the code of the street is insignificant in the lives of young women, but they highlight our lack of understanding for exactly *how* the street code comes into play in their romantic relationships, especially in predicting satisfaction.

With regards to the "player" role seemingly embedded within the code, the basic APIM results, which showed similar negative associations between the street code and commitment for both men and women, challenge the notion that this role is uniquely masculine. To reiterate, support for the code's prescription of a masculine "player" role would have been provided if the street code was found to be more strongly tied to men's commitment than to women's and/or if the male, but not female, street code-commitment relationship held despite the consideration of hostility. Such findings would indicate that either the street code has a unique association with men's commitment, or it has a similar association with commitment for both men and women but for different reasons. Hence, given that relationship characteristics may explain women's but not men's reduced commitment, the basic APIM provided only tentative support for the gender-neutrality of the player role. This support was solidified, however, by the mediator model. More specifically, relationship hostility accounted for the association between street code and commitment among men but failed to account for this association among women. Such results suggest that street-identified young women may find value in what was thought to be a strictly masculine role embedded within the code.

Given the vast amount of qualitative work documenting the importance of the “player” role for street-oriented young men, it seems premature to discount such evidence based on the current findings. Rather, our findings do not preclude the possibility that, for men, such a role actually contributes to increased relationship hostility, and hence, is associated with lower commitment through this process. Furthermore, the current sample consists of young men who are in an established relationship and hence may have failed to capture those men who most strictly carry out the player role. Nevertheless, the present results suggest that the processes linking one’s street code orientation to his/her relationship commitment differ for men and women in potentially significant ways.

Partner Effects—To our knowledge, this was the first study to examine partner effects in relation to street code orientation. Partner predictions were informed by two research perspectives. The first was that of evolutionary psychologists, who argue for evolved gender differences in mate preferences such that men prefer women who are able and willing to bear and care for children and women prefer men who are able and willing to protect and defend a family (Buss, 1994, 1999). The second was that of several sociologists (Oliver, 2006; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995), who argue that because endorsement of the street code places people, particularly men, at risk of victimization, imprisonment, and often unemployment, a partner’s commitment to the code would be stressful and undesirable for all people but especially for women.

Assuming that one’s commitment to the street code may provide evidence for women’s ability, or lack thereof, to carry out the task of nurturing a child and for men’s ability to provide for and protect a family, it was proposed that women would respond with less hostility and more satisfaction and commitment whereas men would respond with increased hostility and less satisfaction and commitment to street-oriented partners. Overall, this perspective found little support. Although the basic APIM showed that women’s street code orientation significantly decreased men’s commitment while men’s street code orientation had no significant effect on women’s commitment and, hence, appeared to provide some support for evolutionary psychology perspective, the overwhelming majority of findings refuted women’s preference for street-oriented men and men’s preference for non-street-oriented women. For instance, the basic APIM revealed that women’s relationship satisfaction was reduced, not bolstered, by a partner’s endorsement of the street code. Further, the APM_eM showed that women tended to respond more hostilely with the increasing street-orientation of their partners but that men’s hostility was unaffected by their partner’s commitment to the street code. Such findings contradict the predictions drawn from the evolutionary psychology literature and provide support for those drawn from the sociological literature with respect to women’s adverse reactions to street-oriented men (Oliver, 2006; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995).

Further, the null partner effect of men’s street orientation on women’s commitment, could also be explained by young women’s internalization of hegemonic conceptions of femininity and masculinity and/or of the unique structural positions of men and women in U.S. society, as has been argued by many feminist scholars to explain women’s greater levels of faithfulness and their supposed preference for “bad boys” (see DeLamater & Hyde, 1998; Petersen & Hyde, 2010 for reviews). Two other explanations for the null association between men’s street code orientation and women’s commitment are plausible, the first of which is that this null association is a product of two opposing effects. That is, perhaps the negative consequences that are thought to coincide with men’s investment in the street code (e.g. hostility, incarceration, violence, death) counteract women’s allegedly evolved preference for risk-taking men and hegemonic conceptions of masculinity to produce a null effect of men’s street code on women’s relationship commitment. If these offsetting pressures operate to similar degrees on women’s mate preferences, a null association would

be expected. A second explanation for women's persistent commitment in the face of more street-oriented male partners comes from recent work by Simon and Barrett (2010). This work suggests that young women, compared to young men, are more concerned with and reactive to relationship status (versus relationship quality) than are men. Hence, despite the increased hostility and decreased satisfaction of women in relationships with more street-oriented partners, they may remain committed because the existence of the relationship and not the quality of said relationship matters most for "women's identity and feelings of self-worth" (Simon & Barrett, 2010, p.178). Support for such explanations requires further research, however.

The finding that women's street code orientation is negatively associated with men's commitment but not with men's satisfaction is opposite to the pattern of partner effects found for women in the sample. One possibility for such findings is that men with street-oriented partners do not necessarily view such partners as being hostile, as was indicated by the nonsignificant association between women's self-reported street code orientation and men's reports of female hostility, thus leaving men's relationship satisfaction unassociated with women's endorsement of the code. Likewise, related to the negative partner effect on men's commitment, an association that remains after controlling for hostility, it may be the case that because street-oriented female partners are themselves less committed to their relationships, they may not expect commitment from men, perhaps freeing them from moral or obligatory constraints (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999). Such possibilities require further investigation. Nonetheless, the differential and gendered partner effects on relationship satisfaction and commitment support past research suggesting that these two constructs, although related, are unique indicators of relationship quality (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Stanley, Rhoades, & Whitton, 2010).

Limitations, Implications, and Future Directions

Prior to discussing the implications of the present findings, we must acknowledge the limitations of this study. First and foremost, although the project from which the current data were drawn is longitudinal, the couple-level data used in the present analyses were available at only the latest wave of data collection. Thus, the present study was cross-sectional and could not establish causality between street code endorsement and relationship outcomes with certainty. Future research could benefit from longitudinal couple data. In particular, the present study could decipher only the relationship between street code endorsement and current satisfaction and commitment, while longitudinal studies would be able to assess how this relationship changes over time. Further, as Ballard-Reisch and Weigel (1999) suggest, relationship commitment can be predictive of how one perceives and responds to conflict. Hence, longitudinal couple-level data could account for the potentially reciprocal relationships between hostility, satisfaction, and commitment and would certainly be welcome.

A second limitation of the current study concerns the generalizeability of its findings given its relatively homogenous sample. The present sample included primarily African American couples and was limited to those target youth who lived in GA and IA at the time of FACHS initiation. This homogeneity necessarily restricts the study's generalizability, and thus, future studies are needed to replicate and expand upon its findings on a larger scale. Nonetheless, this lack of generalizeability is somewhat offset by the present focus on an often-ignored population of young people and its ability to capture the heterogeneity within the population of African American emerging adults and their intimate relationships.

Although the present study controlled for both partners' reports of neighborhood disorder and educational attainment, we were unable to control for socioeconomic status more directly due to the unavailability of data. Given that both family and community SES are

thought to be important predictors of street code internalization, future studies are needed to assess the degree to which SES explains the current findings. Longitudinal dyad studies that assess partners' experiences with poverty, discrimination, and community disorder prior to forming their current relationship as well as their experiences as a couple would best be able to parse out these effects.

Lastly, other processes whereby street code endorsement may affect relationship satisfaction and general commitment remain open to empirical investigation, as does the association between street code endorsement and the different types of commitment (Johnson et al., 1999). Although the hypothesized process accounted for some of the association between street code orientation and relationship outcomes, several direct pathways remained statistically significant even after accounting for relationship hostility. Hence, other factors that make the romantic relationships of street-oriented youth less satisfying and less binding must be considered and incorporated into future models. This may be particularly important for understanding the association between street code orientation and relationship outcomes for women, as women's endorsement of the street code was only weakly related to relationship hostility.

Nevertheless, the present study was the first to examine how a person's internalization of the street code plays out within romantic relationships. Furthermore, instead of focusing on intraindividual effects, this study took a relational approach by examining both actor and partner effects. Findings both challenged and supported prior research in that the internalization of the street code by either oneself or one's partner was negatively associated with both satisfaction and commitment, but these relationships were gendered in only partially expected ways. For instance, prior qualitative research (Anderson, 1999; Jimerson & Oware, 2006; Oliver, 2006) has largely suggested that the code of the street serves as a lifestyle guide for men much more so than for women, especially in its coupling of respect with men's sexual prowess. The present findings suggest, however, that the direct association between street code endorsement and relationship commitment does not differ for men and women. Hence, "the player" role that is seemingly embedded within the code of the street may apply to both men and women equally, at least to the extent that it governs current romantic relationships. It appears, however, that the code may affect men's and women's commitment through different processes while still producing similar outcomes, and relationship hostility appears to be one such process.

Future studies must continue to examine the implications of the street code for the formation, quality, and disruption of romantic relationships. Despite past emphasis on the street code and its implications for "public" social relations, it appears that the internalization of the code may infiltrate young people's most intimate relationships, those between romantic partners. Given that African Americans are disproportionately situated in the contexts which give rise to street orientations, the possibility that such orientations may help explain the racial disparities in the formation, quality, and maintenance of romantic relationships must continue to be explored.

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Figure 1.
Classic Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

Figure 2.

Actor-Partner Mediator Model (APMeM)

Note: Direct effects from street code to satisfaction and commitment have been excluded from the figure for clarity. Such direct paths are tested for significance in the analyses, as explained in the plan of analysis, but are expected to be mediated by the indicators of relationship hostility. Further, to decrease clutter in the figure, correlations among error terms for the endogenous variables have also been excluded. All such correlations are included in the analyses, however.

Figure 3.

Actor-Partner Mediator Model (APMeM): Reduced

†p .10, *p .05, **p .01, ***p .001 (two-tailed); N = 218 dyads

 $\chi^2=9.682$, $df = 16$, $p = .883$; CFI=1.00, RMSEA = .00

Note: Subscripts M and W indicate mens' reports and womens' reports, respectively. To decrease clutter in the figure, error terms and correlations among error terms for the endogenous variables have been excluded from the figure. All such correlations are included in the analyses, however.

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Table 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 Age	0.079	0.114	0.016	-0.110	0.112	-0.148	-0.048	0.047	0.020	0.135	-0.026	0.007	-0.139	-0.174	0.015	-0.005	0.022	0.037
2 Years of Education	0.161	0.231	-0.085	-0.070	-0.139	0.033	0.004	-0.086	0.083	-0.011	0.071	0.009	-0.090	-0.070	-0.109	-0.106	0.158	0.086
3 Length of Relationship ^a	-0.047	-0.150	-	-0.138	0.383	-0.132	-0.086	0.070	0.006	0.159	0.029	0.067	0.132	0.036	0.298	0.196	-0.168	0.055
4 Interracial Couple	0.010	0.079	-0.138	-	0.046	-0.006	-0.058	0.067	-0.004	0.014	-0.169	-0.162	-0.042	0.052	-0.097	-0.005	0.029	0.180
5 Child	0.050	-0.203	0.383	0.046	-	-0.197	-0.082	0.043	0.083	0.176	-0.103	0.094	0.121	-0.001	0.251	0.150	-0.125	0.042
6 Dating	-0.025	0.039	-0.132	-0.006	-0.197	-	-0.324	-0.186	-0.129	-0.156	-0.127	0.026	0.004	0.018	-0.011	0.094	-0.245	-0.373
7 Dating Exclusively	-0.147	-0.077	-0.086	-0.058	-0.082	-0.324	-	-0.428	-0.296	-0.358	0.051	0.015	-0.029	-0.113	0.018	0.038	0.032	-0.083
8 Cohabit-Not Engaged	0.134	0.051	0.070	0.067	0.043	-0.186	-0.428	-	-0.170	-0.206	-0.159	-0.011	0.060	0.105	0.077	0.020	-0.009	-0.020
9 Cohabit-Engaged	0.008	-0.012	0.006	-0.004	0.083	-0.129	-0.296	-0.170	-	-0.143	0.023	-0.055	0.036	-0.023	-0.079	-0.172	0.102	0.221
10 Married	0.071	0.024	0.159	0.014	0.176	-0.156	-0.358	-0.206	-0.143	-	0.206	0.015	-0.063	0.042	-0.033	-0.013	0.105	0.293
11 Religious Attendance	0.028	0.133	-0.090	-0.279	-0.040	-0.059	0.100	-0.124	-0.071	0.117	0.274	-0.048	-0.045	-0.150	0.005	-0.081	0.162	0.107
12 Neighborhood Disorder	0.035	0.008	0.039	-0.011	0.000	0.038	0.030	-0.025	-0.031	-0.023	-0.058	0.073	0.329	0.058	0.100	-0.002	-0.005	-0.108
13 Criminal Involvement	-0.138	-0.071	0.063	0.035	0.007	0.035	-0.043	0.072	0.037	-0.086	-0.146	0.097	-0.021	0.332	0.156	0.076	-0.106	-0.096
14 Street Code	-0.056	-0.146	0.097	-0.110	0.073	0.083	0.024	-0.046	0.010	-0.068	-0.192	0.074	0.295	0.009	0.202	0.192	-0.162	-0.125
15 Female Hostility	-0.104	-0.086	0.125	0.057	0.081	0.096	-0.049	0.094	-0.023	-0.107	-0.129	0.139	0.326	0.258	0.314	0.646	-0.530	-0.289
16 Male Hostility	-0.025	-0.079	0.158	0.070	0.122	0.067	-0.049	0.135	-0.117	-0.045	-0.129	0.135	0.301	0.194	0.702	0.327	-0.533	-0.349
17 Relationship Satisfaction	0.080	0.025	-0.042	0.016	-0.038	-0.158	-0.005	-0.074	0.072	0.174	0.062	-0.119	-0.304	-0.300	-0.623	-0.647	0.385	0.425
18 Relationship Commitment	0.048	0.151	-0.019	0.107	0.036	-0.299	0.072	-0.001	0.002	0.177	0.084	-0.187	-0.232	-0.307	-0.406	-0.334	0.441	0.204
Women	Mean	21.60	12.65	2.80	0.27	0.44	0.12	0.43	0.20	0.11	3.32	8.01	0.24	10.09	11.82	11.69	-0.01	2.26
	SD	2.34	2.32	1.75	0.44	0.50	0.33	0.50	0.40	0.31	1.54	2.47	0.57	2.95	3.06	3.19	2.56	0.79
	Range	17-32	1-17	0-5	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-1	2-9	6-17	0-3	5-20	8-22	8-25	-9-4	1-3
Gender Difference		***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**	**	***	***	***	***	***
Men	Mean	23.35	12.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.08	8.83	0.44	11.92	12.98	11.87	-0.05	1.94
	SD	3.63	2.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.34	3.02	0.82	3.11	3.72	2.77	2.36	0.84
	Range	18-42	1-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2-10	6-18	0-5	5-20	8-24	8-21	-8-4	1-3

Note . Females are below and males are above the diagonal; Bolded diagonal represents correlations between partners' reports.

^aDyad-level variables are indicated by italics.

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$p^2 .10$
 $p^2 .05$
 $p^2 .01$
 $p^2 .001$;

Shaded cells are significant at $p < .05$; $N = 218$ dyads

Table 2

Reduced APIM for Direct Effects of Street Code Orientation on Relationship Satisfaction and Commitment

Source	Satisfaction	Commitment
Street Code --> Endogenous Variable		
Actor Effects		
$X_W \rightarrow Y_W$	-0.161 **	-0.056 **
$X_M \rightarrow Y_M$	-0.113 *	-0.043 *
Partner Effects		
$X_M \rightarrow Y_W$	-0.102 *	0
$X_W \rightarrow Y_M$	0	-0.043 *
Explained Variances		
R^2_W	0.051 $\dagger$	0.044
R^2_M	0.022	0.050 $\dagger$

Note. Nonsignificant paths were set to zero

$\chi^2=0.365$. $df = 2$, $p = 0.833$; CFI=1.00, RMSEA = 0.00

$\dagger$
p .10

*
p .05

**
p .01

p .001 (two-tailed);

N = 218 dyads

Table 3

Reduced APMEM with street code as exogenous variable, hostility as mediator, and relationship outcomes as endogenous variables

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Endogenous Variables</i>	
	Satisfaction	Commitment
Street Code -->Female Hostility		
<i>Actor Effects</i>	X _W -->M _W	0.102 *
	X _W -->M _M	ns
<i>Partner Effects</i>	X _M -->M _W	0.135 *
	X _M -->M _M	0.211 **
Street Code -->Male Hostility		
<i>Actor Effects</i>	X _M -->M _M	0.203 **
	X _M -->M _W	0.155 *
<i>Partner Effects</i>	X _W -->M _M	ns
	X _W -->M _W	ns
Female Hostility -->Endogenous Variable		
<i>Actor Effects</i>	M _W -->Y _W	-0.252 ***
	M _M -->Y _W	-0.149 **
<i>Partner Effects</i>	M _W -->Y _M	ns
	M _M -->Y _M	-0.271 ***
Male Hostility -->Endogenous Variable		
<i>Actor Effects</i>	M _M -->Y _M	-0.298 ***
	M _W -->Y _M	-0.112
<i>Partner Effects</i>	M _M -->Y _W	ns
	M _W -->Y _W	-0.399 ***
Street Code -->Endogenous Variable		
<i>Actor Effects</i>	X _W -->Y _W	-0.128 **
	X _M -->Y _M	ns
<i>Partner Effects</i>	X _M -->Y _W	ns
	X _W -->Y _M	-0.159 **
Explained Variances		
R ² Endogenous variable	W	0.444 ***
R ² Endogenous variable	M	0.309 ***

Note. Results shown are standardized maximum likelihood estimates. Subscripts M and W indicate mens' reports and womens' reports, respectively.

$\chi^2 = 9.682$, $df = 16$, $p = .883$; CFI=1.00, RMSEA = .00

$p^2 .10$

* $p^2 .05$

**
 $p^2 .01$

 $p^2 .001$;

N = 218 dyads