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The Dyadic Effects of Relationship Uncertainty on Negative Relational Maintenance

Marianne Dainton, Alan K. Goodboy, Dana Borzea, & Zachary W. Goldman

This study examined the dyadic effects of relationship uncertainty and the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors. Romantic couples (N = 227 dyads) completed a survey assessing their current relationship uncertainty (i.e., definition, mutuality, behavioral, future) and their use of negative behaviors to maintain their relationship (i.e., jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, destructive conflict, allowing control). Multilevel modeling was used to calculate actor-partner interdependence models. Actor effects were revealed between relationship uncertainty and negative relational maintenance. Results also revealed some partner effects. However, nine of these effects were moderated with significant actor-by-partner interactions, indicating that actors and partners with low relationship uncertainty use less negative maintenance in their relationships.

Keywords: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model; Negative Relational Maintenance; Relationship Uncertainty

Uncertainty in romantic relationships is positively correlated with anxiety, stress, and tension in relationships (Bradac, 2001; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002), and is negatively associated with an individual's relationship satisfaction (Knobloch, 2007; Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009). Theiss (2011) has hypothesized that the reason relationship

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uncertainty may have negative relational effects is that it fosters the use of negative and ineffective communication. Thus far, the majority of studies have focused on how relationship uncertainty is associated with approach and avoidance behaviors, but Knobloch and Theiss (2011) have called for more nuanced research that investigates a wider range of communication behaviors linked to the experience of relationship uncertainty. Accordingly, the goal of this study is to examine the connection between uncertainty and ineffective communication through a dyadic focus on the way that relationship uncertainty is associated with one specific form of dysfunctional communication: negative relational maintenance.

Relationship Uncertainty

Relationship uncertainty "denotes the ambiguity people experience about the nature of the relationship itself, apart from either self or partner concerns" (Knobloch, 2007, p. 34). Research indicates that relationship uncertainty is more strongly correlated with relational satisfaction than either self or partner uncertainty (Knobloch & Knobloch-Fedders, 2010), and that relationship uncertainty plays a more proximal role in relational interactions than do those other forms of uncertainty (Worley & Samp, 2014). According to Knobloch and Solomon (1999, 2002), relationship uncertainty includes four factors: (1) behavioral uncertainty (i.e., rules for relational behavior), (2) mutuality uncertainty (i.e., reciprocity of feelings in the relationship), (3) definition uncertainty (i.e., status of the relationship), and (4) future uncertainty (i.e., the long-term future of the relationship). These four types of relationship uncertainty vary based on the nature of the relationship (Theiss & Nagy, 2010) and are differentially associated with communication behaviors (Dainton, 2003).

In their original development of the concept of relationship uncertainty, Knobloch and Solomon (1999) argued that the experience of uncertainty is likely to play a meaningful role in relational maintenance processes. Research supports this proposition; uncertainty has explained a significant amount of the variance in the use of prosocial maintenance (e.g., Dailey, Hampel, & Roberts, 2010; Dainton, 2003). However, relationship maintenance involves both prosocial and antisocial behaviors that are enacted to sustain a relationship (see Ayres, 1983; Dindia & Baxter, 1987). Yet, no research has sought to examine the links between relationship uncertainty and the use of negative maintenance behaviors.

Negative Maintenance

Negative maintenance refers to undesirable behaviors that relational partners enact for relationship purposes (Dainton & Gross, 2008). Dainton and Gross (2008) inductively identified six negative maintenance behaviors, including (1) jealousy induction, which is an intentional effort to make the partner jealous; (2) avoidance, which refers both to avoiding the partner, as well as avoiding topics that might lead to arguments; (3) spying, which involves checking the partner's mail or phone, or actively talking to the partner's friends to gather information; (4) infidelity, which includes behaviors ranging from flirting to having sex with other people so that the individual can prevent boredom in the relationship; (5)

destructive conflict, which refers to controlling behavior and seeking arguments; and (6) allowing control, which references breaking plans with family or friends to be with the partner, avoiding activities that the individual previously enjoyed because the partner does not like them, and letting the partner make decisions for him or her.

Recall that there are theoretical reasons to suggest that relationship uncertainty will be associated with the use of negative maintenance (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). There are empirical reasons to support this link as well. Previous research has found associations between relationship uncertainty and jealousy-inducing behavior (Pytlak, Zerega, & Houser, 2015), surveillance (Stewart, Dainton, & Goodboy, 2014), and avoidance (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). These findings lend further support to the idea that relationship uncertainty is associated with behaviors analogous to negative maintenance.

Dyadic Effects

Finally, although relationship uncertainty is an intrapersonal experience, the effects of relationship uncertainty are dyadic. A series of studies has established that one partner's relationship uncertainty is associated with his/her own behavior as well as the behavior of the relational partner (e.g., Knobloch & Theiss, 2010, 2011). These studies provide the basis for the importance of using a dyadic approach to understanding relationship uncertainty through the use of the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). The APIM accounts for the nonindependence between partners' scores on a variable and allows researchers to test for an actor effect (i.e., the effect of one partner's relationship uncertainty on his/her own negative relational maintenance), a partner effect (i.e., the effect of one partner's relationship uncertainty on the other partner's use of negative relational maintenance), and actor-by-partner effects (i.e., the presence of actor effects that are conditional on partner effects). Given that a more robust picture of the effects of relationship uncertainty requires taking a dyadic perspective, we offer the following hypotheses and research question:

> H1: Relationship uncertainty will be associated with positive actor effects for the use of negative relational maintenance.

> H2: Relationship uncertainty will be associated with positive partner effects for the use of negative relational maintenance.

> RQ: Are there interaction effects between an actor's relationship uncertainty and a partner's relationship uncertainty (actor-by-partner interactions) and the use of negative maintenance?

METHOD

Participants

As part of a larger study, participants in this study were 454 heterosexual romantic partners who were matched as 227 couples/dyads ranging from 18 to 80 years ($M = 22.23$, $SD = 5.91$). Participants were in the relationship between two and 768 months

(M = 30.46 months/2.54 years, SD = 64.16 months). Participants labeled their romantic involvement as dating (n = 174), seriously committed (n = 248), engaged (n = 16), and married (n = 16).

Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval, students at a mid-Atlantic university enrolled in one of several undergraduate communication courses were solicited to participate in the study. Questionnaires were administered to all students in the courses and instructions for participant criteria were provided. To meet the criteria, participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and currently involved in a romantic relationship; sexual orientation was not mentioned in the instructions. If the students met the criteria, they could participate in the study with their partner; if not, they gave the questionnaires to a romantic couple that met the criteria to receive extra credit. Participants in the study received two identical questionnaires, each with an attached envelope and a unique code number for each dyad. One questionnaire/envelope had a letter "A" after the unique code number and the other questionnaire/envelope had a letter "B" after the same code number. There were no instructions given as to which partner completed A or B. The questionnaire took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. For privacy purposes, participants were instructed to seal each individual questionnaire in a separate envelope after it was completed and paperclip it with the other partner's sealed envelope containing his or her completed questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were collected in the solicited classrooms and students received extra credit. After the responses were gathered, the researchers checked that each dyad was paired based on the unique code number.

Measures

Relationship Uncertainty
Knobloch and Solomon's (1999) Relationship Uncertainty Scale operationalized behavioral, mutuality, definitional, and future uncertainty (four items each). In the directions, participants were prompted to think about how certain they were about elements of their romantic relationship. This 16-item measure uses the stem "how certain are you about" with a 6-point, Likert-type response format (1 = *completely uncertain*, 6 = *completely certain*). Items were reverse-coded so that greater composite scores indicated more relationship uncertainty (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). Previous reliability alphas have ranged from .73 to .89 (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). In this study, obtained Cronbach alphas were: behavioral (M = 2.03, SD = .89, α = .80), mutuality (M = 2.11, SD = 1.03, α = .87), definitional (M = 2.02, SD = 1.00, α = .85), and future (M = 2.56, SD = 1.17, α = .84).

Negative Relational Maintenance
Dainton and Gross's (2008) Negative Maintenance Scale measured six continuous maintenance behaviors: jealousy induction (two items), avoidance (four items), spying (three items), infidelity (two items), destructive conflict (four items), and

allowing control (five items). In the directions, participants were prompted to think about behaviors they have used for the sake of maintaining their romantic relationship. This 20-item measure uses a 7-point, Likert response format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Previous reliability alphas for the subscales have ranged from .74 to .89 (Dainton & Gross, 2008). In this study, obtained Cronbach alphas were jealousy induction ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.24$, $\alpha = .86$), avoidance ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = .71$), spying ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.32$, $\alpha = .79$), infidelity ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.22$, $\alpha = .76$), destructive conflict ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.29$, $\alpha = .80$), and allowing control ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.17$, $\alpha = .76$).

RESULTS

Multilevel modeling was used in SPSS (Kenny & Kashy, 2010) to examine actor and partner effects of relationship uncertainty (definition, mutuality, behavioral, future) and the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors (i.e., jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, destructive conflict, allowing control), accounting for nonindependence in the data by treating the dyad as the unit of analysis (partners as nested within the dyad). Prior to data analysis, actor and partner scores on relationship uncertainty were grand-mean centered and sex was contrast coded as 1 = men and −1 = women. As a preliminary step in model testing, maximum likelihood (ML) estimation was used to determine if sex should be considered a distinguishing variable in further analyses (Kenny et al., 2006). None of these models produced significant deviance tests, indicating that sex was not a distinguishing variable.[1] Thus, the APIMs treated couples as indistinguishable and the residual structure was treated as compound symmetry (repeated covariance type) with restricted maximum likelihood estimation as the estimation method. The complete reporting of all 24 APIMs and multilevel parameter estimates are reported in Table 1.[2]

Overall, there were 21 actor effects and seven partner effects between relationship uncertainty and negative relational maintenance behaviors, fully confirming Hypothesis 1 and partially confirming Hypothesis 2. Individuals higher in definitional uncertainty reported using more jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, and destructive conflict (*B*s ranging from .17 to .48). There were also positive partner effects between definitional uncertainty and jealousy induction and infidelity (*B*s = .19 and .13 respectively). Individuals higher in mutuality uncertainty reported using more of all six negative maintenance behaviors (*B*s ranging from .24 to .50), and there was a positive partner effect between mutuality uncertainty and jealousy induction (*B* = .19). Individuals higher in behavioral uncertainty reported using more of all six negative maintenance behaviors (*B*s ranging from .23 to .47), and there were positive partner effects between behavioral uncertainty and jealousy induction, spying, and infidelity (*B*s ranging from .14 to .23). Finally, individuals higher in future uncertainty reported using more jealousy induction, avoidance, infidelity, and destructive conflict (*B*s ranging from .13 to .28), and there was a positive partner effect between future uncertainty and infidelity (*B* = .14).

Table 1 Multilevel Parameter Estimates for APIMs

Relationship Uncertainty	Jealousy Induction			Avoidance			Spying			Infidelity			Destructive Conflict			Allowing Control		
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β
Definition	(Pseudo R^2 = .181)			(Pseudo R^2 = .011)			(Pseudo R^2 = .059)			(Pseudo R^2 = .185)			(Pseudo R^2 = .045)			(Pseudo R^2 = .022)		
Intercept	2.04			3.60			2.50			1.78			2.77			2.79		
Actor Effect	**.44**	**(.06)***	**.35**	**.17**	**(.08)^**	**.13**	**.26**	**(.07)***	**.20**	**.48**	**(.06)***	**.39**	**.21**	**(.07)***	**.16**	.12	(.06)	.10
Partner Effect	**.19**	**(.06)†**	**.15**	.05	(.08)	.04	.14	(.07)	.10	**.13**	**(.06)^**	**.10**	.13	(.07)	.10	.04	(.06)	.03
Actor × Partner	**-.22**	**(.06)***	**-.18**	-.07	(.07)	-.05	**-.21**	**(.07)†**	**-.16**	-.11	(.06)	-.09	**-.15**	**(.07)^**	**-.12**	-.06	(.06)	-.05
Mutuality	(Pseudo R^2 = .195)			(Pseudo R^2 = .032)			(Pseudo R^2 = .049)			(Pseudo R^2 = .203)			(Pseudo R^2 = .054)			(Pseudo R^2 = .025)		
Intercept	2.01			3.61			2.46			1.78			2.78			2.80		
Actor Effect	**.41**	**(.06)***	**.34**	**.24**	**(.07)***	**.18**	**.28**	**(.06)***	**.22**	**.50**	**(.05)***	**.43**	**.28**	**(.06)***	**.22**	**.22**	**(.06)***	**.20**
Partner Effect	**.19**	**(.06)†**	**.16**	.03	(.07)	.02	.07	(.06)	.06	.10	(.05)	.08	.06	(.06)	.05	-.02	(.06)	-.02
Actor × Partner	**-.17**	**(.05)***	**-.14**	-.08	(.05)	-.06	**-.13**	**(.05)^**	**-.11**	**-.11**	**(.05)^**	**-.09**	**-.14**	**(.05)†**	**-.12**	-.06	(.05)	-.05
Behavioral	(Pseudo R^2 = .198)			(Pseudo R^2 = .035)			(Pseudo R^2 = .073)			(Pseudo R^2 = .203)			(Pseudo R^2 = .064)			(Pseudo R^2 = .037)		
Intercept	1.97			3.59			2.41			1.73			2.70			2.76		
Actor Effect	**.47**	**(.06)***	**.34**	**.31**	**(.08)***	**.21**	**.29**	**(.07)***	**.20**	**.46**	**(.06)***	**.33**	**.23**	**(.07)***	**.16**	**.26**	**(.07)***	**.20**
Partner Effect	**.20**	**(.06)†**	**.14**	.01	(.08)	-.01	**.14**	**(.07)^**	**.10**	**.23**	**(.06)***	**.17**	.13	(.07)	.09	.02	(.07)	.01
Actor × Partner	**-.16**	**(.07)^**	**-.10**	-.08	(.08)	-.05	-.09	(.08)	-.06	-.05	(.07)	-.03	-.06	(.08)	-.04	.00	(.07)	.00
Future	(Pseudo R^2 = .125)			(Pseudo R^2 = .017)			(Pseudo R^2 = .018)			(Pseudo R^2 = .111)			(Pseudo R^2 = .014)			(Pseudo R^2 = .001)		
Intercept	2.00			3.57			2.44			1.78			2.70			2.81		
Actor Effect	**.28**	**(.05)***	**.26**	**.16**	**(.06)†**	**.14**	.10	(.06)	.09	**.24**	**(.05)***	**.23**	**.13**	**(.06)^**	**.12**	.01	(.05)	.01
Partner Effect	.06	(.05)	.05	.01	(.06)	.01	.05	(.06)	.05	**.14**	**(.05)†**	**.13**	.03	(.06)	.03	.05	(.05)	.05
Actor × Partner	**-.13**	**(.05)†**	**-.14**	-.02	(.05)	-.02	-.09	(.05)	-.09	-.08	(.05)	-.09	-.02	(.05)	-.02	-.06	(.05)	-.07

Note. Significant effects are in bold.
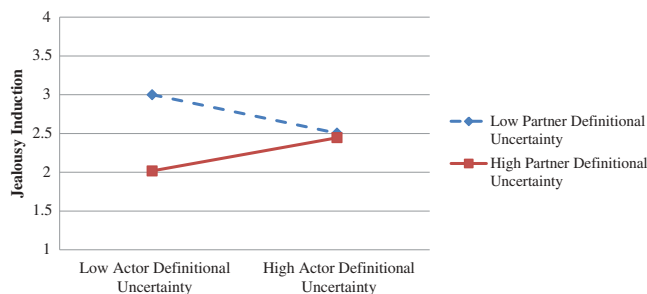
^ $p < .05$. † $p < .01$. * $p < .001$.

Figure 1   Actor × partner interaction depicting definitional uncertainty predicting jealousy induction. Interactions were probed using a pick-a-point approach ($SD = .99638$) where "Low" denotes -1 SD and "High" denotes $+1$ SD in Definitional Uncertainty. Interactions were grand mean centered.
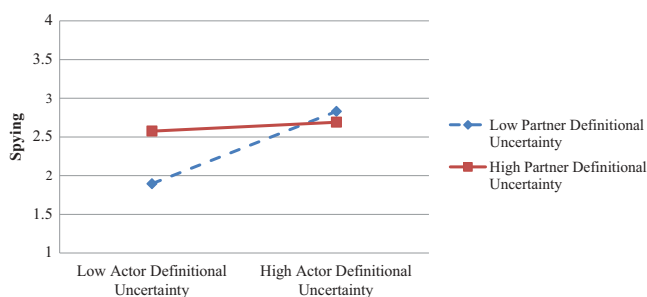

Figure 2   Actor × partner interaction depicting definitional uncertainty predicting spying. Interactions were probed using a pick-a-point approach ($SD = .99638$) where "Low" denotes -1 SD and "High" denotes $+1$ SD in Definitional Uncertainty. Interactions were grand mean centered.

In response to the research question, nine actor-by-partner interactions were discovered. All nine of these moderated dyadic effects (see sample interactions in bold in Table 1) showed a similar trend: When both the actor and the partner's relationship uncertainty were low, negative relational maintenance was used less frequently. If the actor's uncertainty was high, regardless of the level of partner uncertainty, negative relational maintenance was used more frequently. For behavioral and future uncertainty, these moderated effects were significant for the use of jealousy induction. For definitional and mutuality uncertainty, these moderated effects were significant for jealousy induction, spying, and destructive conflict, and for mutuality uncertainty there was an additional significant actor-by-partner effect on infidelity. As an exemplar of these interactions, Figure 1 and Figure 2 graphically display the interactions for definitional uncertainty and jealousy induction (Figure 1) and definitional uncertainty and spying (Figure 2).[3]

DISCUSSION

The results of this study contribute to our understanding of relationship uncertainty and negative maintenance in three ways; they: (1) extend previous research regarding

relationship uncertainty, (2) provide a potential explanatory mechanism for the use of negative maintenance, and (3) echo the importance of investigating relationship uncertainty from a dyadic perspective. First, as predicted, an individual's experience of relationship uncertainty was associated with the use of all six negative maintenance behaviors. Previous research has established that relationship uncertainty is associated with negative communication such as irritating behavior (e.g., Theiss, 2011; Theiss & Solomon, 2006), hurtful messages (Theiss & Knobloch, 2009) and avoidance (e.g., Knobloch & Satterlee, 2009; Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). By incorporating the six negative maintenance behaviors, this study has broadened the types of negative communication behaviors associated empirically with relationship uncertainty, providing further evidence for Theiss's (2011) proposition that "the primary manifestation of relational uncertainty in relationships might be in the ways that it impedes effective communication" (p. 578).

More than simply expanding the range of negative and dysfunctional behaviors associated with relationship uncertainty, this study also provides evidence that although definitional, behavioral, mutuality, and future uncertainty are distinct forms of relationship uncertainty, each is concomitant with negative interaction. In this study, mutuality and behavioral uncertainty were associated with all six negative maintenance behaviors. Regarding behavioral uncertainty, it appears that, when individuals are uncertain about how to behave, their uncertainty is associated with engaging in many different types of negative maintenance, perhaps in an effort to figure out which behavior is appropriate. Also, if an individual is uncertain as to whether his or her partner feels the same way that s/he does, he/she may try many different strategies in order to manage the relationship and ascertain the partner's feelings. On the other hand, although both definitional and future uncertainty were associated significantly with an individual's use of most of the negative maintenance behaviors, allowing control failed to be significantly associated with either type of uncertainty. By nature, mutuality and behavioral uncertainty are dyadic (i.e., they involve not only one's own feelings, but also uncertainty about the partner's feelings or preferences), whereas definitional uncertainty and future uncertainty are more intrapersonal (i.e., they reference primarily the individual's feelings about the relationship). Accordingly, individuals experiencing these types of uncertainty might not feel the need to give up their own wants and needs simply because they are unsure about what the relationship is or where it is going. This distinction warrants further investigation.

In addition, the results of this study further establish the importance of using a relationship uncertainty perspective to understand the relationship maintenance process. Previous research has established the efficacy of using uncertainty as a theoretical mechanism to explain the use of prosocial maintenance (e.g., Dailey et al., 2010; Dainton, 2003). The results of this study support the contention that relationship uncertainty is an important part of relational maintenance, regardless of whether that maintenance is prosocial or antisocial in nature. Perhaps more importantly, these results might assist scholars in theorizing about why people use negative maintenance; by definition, maintenance behaviors are enacted in order to uphold desired relational characteristics (Dindia & Canary, 1993). However, negative maintenance behaviors are associated with dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction (Dainton & Gross, 2008; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011). It is difficult to imagine that individuals are using these negative behaviors to sustain their unhappiness. Instead, it is likely that

negative maintenance behaviors are used as a form of uncertainty reduction (i.e., they are enacted to achieve a desired level of certainty). Of course, despite theoretical reasons to suggest that uncertainty drives behavior (see Berger & Calabrese, 1975), the results of this study do not establish causality. Future research should seek to determine whether the use of negative maintenance is the result of relationship uncertainty, as uncertainty reduction theory would predict, or if it is the cause of that uncertainty. Alternatively, it may be that one partner's actions are fostering uncertainty in the other rather than uncertainty causing the partner's behavior.

However, the possibility that negative maintenance behavior is a response to relationship uncertainty is intriguing. In their original formulation of uncertainty reduction theory, Berger and Calabrese (1975) proposed three ways to reduce uncertainty: passive, active, and interactive. In the case of relationship uncertainty specifically, it appears that "when the state of the relationship itself is in question, research reveals that people use a variety of more covert strategies to gather information" (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, p. 248). A careful examination of the six negative maintenance behaviors suggests that these behaviors range from truly passive behaviors (e.g., avoidance and allowing control) to passive aggressive behaviors (e.g., destructive conflict and infidelity). Future research might seek to tease out these distinctions in an empirically justifiable fashion.

The final contribution made by this study is the support it provides for a dyadic approach to the connection between relationship uncertainty and relational interaction. Previous research has used an APIM approach to investigate how actor and partner relational uncertainty have differentially been associated with appraisals of irritations (Theiss & Knobloch, 2009), negative emotions (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010), emotional and cognitive reactions to sex (Theiss & Nagy, 2010), and relational quality (Knobloch & Knobloch-Fedders, 2010). The dependent variable in each of these studies has been intrapersonal in nature. This study complements these studies by focusing on how one person's relationship uncertainty is associated with communicative behaviors enacted by both the individual and the partner.

Of course, the results of this study suggest that partner and actor-by-partner interaction effects exist but may be limited. There were only seven (out of a possible 24) partner effects. The cleanest interpretation is that when an individual's partner experiences relationship uncertainty, that individual is more likely to engage in jealousy induction and infidelity. On the surface, both behaviors can be considered a form of a "secret test"; jealousy induction is analogous to a triangle test, and infidelity might be a form of endurance (i.e., increasing the rewards or costs of the relationship; Baxter & Wilmot, 1984). However, recall that this is a *partner* effect, which means that the partner is engaging in these behaviors when the *actor* is experiencing uncertainty. As such, the partner's use of these behaviors might actually exacerbate the actor's uncertainty rather than reducing it. Clearly, this paradox warrants additional investigation. It may be that one partner's actions are fostering uncertainty in the other rather than uncertainty causing the partner's behavior.

We also found evidence for nine actor-by-partner interaction effects. Interestingly, the results suggest that, when an actor experiences high levels of definitional and mutuality uncertainty, they are more likely to engage in a variety of negative maintenance behaviors, regardless of whether their partner is also uncertain. However, there is only a single actor-

by-partner effect for behavioral and future uncertainty; in both cases, individuals experiencing high levels of these forms of relationship uncertainty were more likely to engage in jealousy induction regardless of their partner's levels of these forms of uncertainty. These results again point to the fact that the four types of relationship uncertainty are not isomorphic, and are likely to be associated with different behavioral responses. Moreover, these results suggest that jealousy induction is consistently coupled with the experience of relationship uncertainty.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with all research endeavors, there are several limitations that warrant recognition. First, our sample included a wide variety of relationship types, from dating to marriage. Previous research has established that relationship uncertainty is particularly salient for dating couples as compared to those who are married (Theiss & Nagy, 2010). Nevertheless, relationship uncertainty does exist in married couples (Theiss & Nagy, 2010), and it is associated with relationship maintenance for those who are married (Dainton, 2011). Relatedly, we did not seek to determine whether the data collected from nonstudents was fabricated. However, previous research using these methods have failed to uncover any fabricated data (Dainton, 1998).

Second, relational uncertainty is comprised of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). In this study, we focused solely on relationship uncertainty because it operates at a higher order of abstraction than the other two types of uncertainty (Knobloch & Theiss, 2010) and because both self and partner uncertainty covary with relationship uncertainty (Worley & Samp, 2014). Nonetheless, future research should include these two other components of relational uncertainty to provide a more complete picture of the connection between relational uncertainty and the use of negative maintenance. Finally, we must reiterate that our methods did not allow for the establishment of causation. Theoretically, it makes sense that relationship uncertainty would cause an individual to enact negative maintenance behaviors, but the direction of the causal links between these variables must be established empirically.

In conclusion, the results of our study revealed that, when one or both partners in a romantic relationship feel uncertain about the relationship, their maintenance activity includes the use of negative behaviors. By maintaining their relationships in this manner, they may be able to fulfill their needs by seeking information about their partner and by taking control of the relationship, but they do so in a dysfunctional manner. By using negative maintenance, one or both romantic partners, then, are mutually influencing each other to engage in questionable relational behavior because they have doubts about the relationship itself.

Notes

1. For the full reports of empirical distinguishability screening including actor-partner sex interactions and deviance tests, please contact the second author.

2. To account for relationship status as a covariate, we recalculated all 24 APIMs by entering relationship status as a dummy code (0 = dating relationships, 1 = seriously committed relationships) to control for variance explained by potential mean differences in maintenance based on the type of romantic relationship. Controlling for relationship status did not change the results for 21 of the 24 APIMS. Three changes to the results due to including this covariate were (1) the partner effect for definition uncertainty on spying became significant ($B = .17$) and (2) the partner effect of definition uncertainty on infidelity ($B = .08$), and (3) future uncertainty on infidelity ($B = .10$) became nonsignificant.
3. For the full reports of actor-by-partner interactions, including simple slopes analyses and figures graphing each interaction, please contact the second author.

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