For Better and for Worse: Genes and Parenting Interact to Predict Future Behavior in Romantic Relationships

Results

- A study was done by Masarik, et al., (2014) for exploring the impact of genes and parenting on the behaviors in a romantic relationship. They had conducted interviews with single parent and two-parent families were done for assessing the behavior of the adults in their romantic relationships.
- They had inspected the gene-environment correlations (rGE) between the genetic index of the target and the parenting. Two models were deduced for conducting regression analysis. First one was the hostility model and the second one was the positive-engagement model. The target participants were the G2 while they were observed interacting with their parents who were denoted as G1.
- Independent observers rated the hostility and positive engagement by G1 and G2 during structured interaction tasks. An index was created for the hypothesized genetic plasticity by adding the G2=s allelic variation for the polymorphisms in five genes.

Results

- It was observed that the G2 individuals were exposed to more positively engaged or hostile parenting behaviors during adolescence stage were more positively engaged or hostile towards their romantic partner provided they had a higher score on the genetic plasticity index.
- In other words, the genetic makeup of an individual with respect to the chosen give genes moderated the link between the prior experiences in the family and the future romantic relationship behaviors.

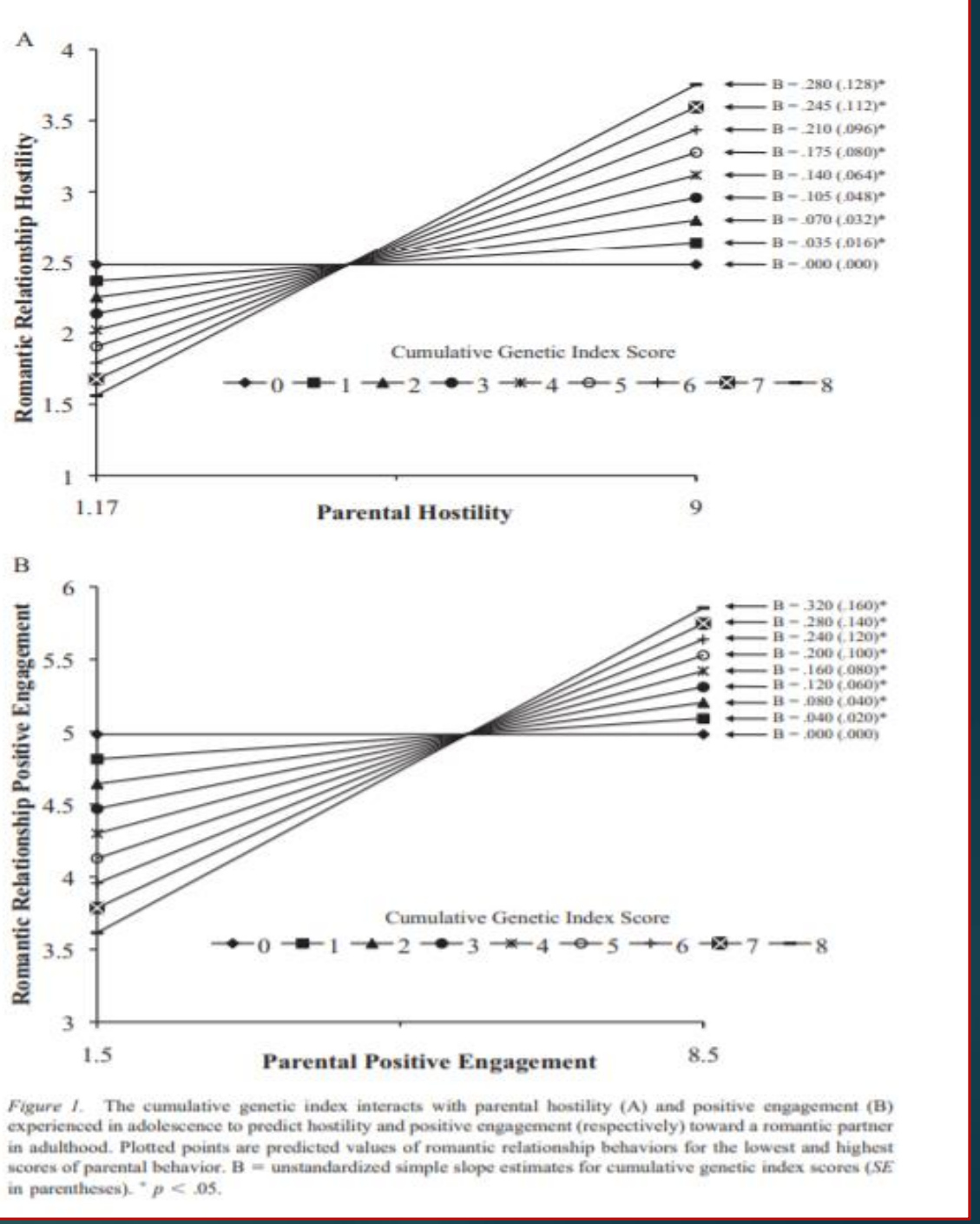

Figure 1. The cumulative genetic index interacts with parental hostility (A) and positive engagement (B) experienced in adolescence to predict hostility and positive engagement (respectively) toward a romantic partner in adulthood. Plotted points are predicted values of romantic relationship behaviors for the lowest and highest scores of parental behavior. B = unstandardized simple slope estimates for cumulative genetic index scores (*SE* in parentheses). * $p < .05$.

Discussion

- The result of this study was conforming the differential susceptibility perspective. G2 individuals who had hostile parenting during their adolescence stage were more hostile in their romantic partner if they had higher score on the cumulative genetic index for all the five genes.
- When G2 individuals were exposed to the positively engaged parents during their adolescence and they more likely demonstrated higher positive engagement in their romantic relationship if they had greater scores on the cumulative genetic index and vice versa.
- The results of this study are consistent with the other reports on differential susceptibility to parenting as a function of genetic-variability in the serotonin and dopamine system.
- This study evidenced that there are certain genetic factors which cause increased susceptibility to previous family environments and their subsequent behaviors in romantic relationship.