

September 2024 Webinar

**Lopsided Love:
Understanding Asymmetrical
Commitment in Modern Love**

Presenter:

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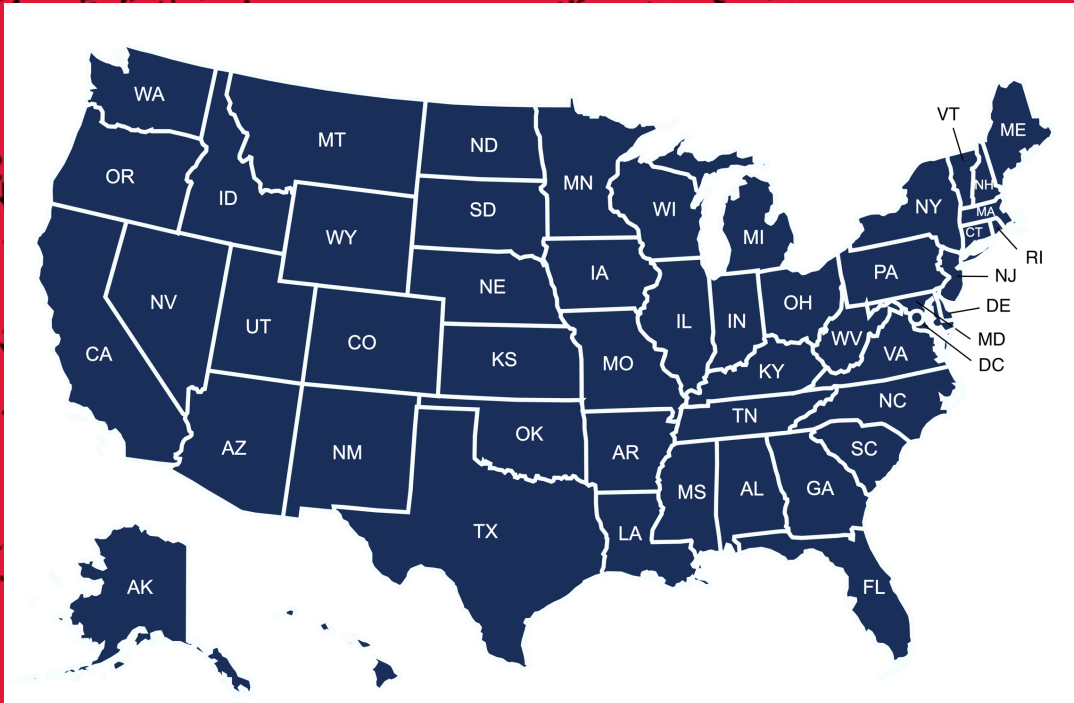
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Our Mission

Empowering teens and young adults with knowledge and research-based skills to successfully navigate their intimate relationships.



We believe in research.



We believe in stable, safe, and nurturing families.



We believe that relationship education is for everyone.



Lopsided Love: Understanding Asymmetrical Commitment in Modern Love

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Commitment develops to
secure attachment.

Stanley, Rhoades, & Whitton (2010)

But commitment is often
not equal, resulting in
lopsided love.



Asymmetry is Consequential

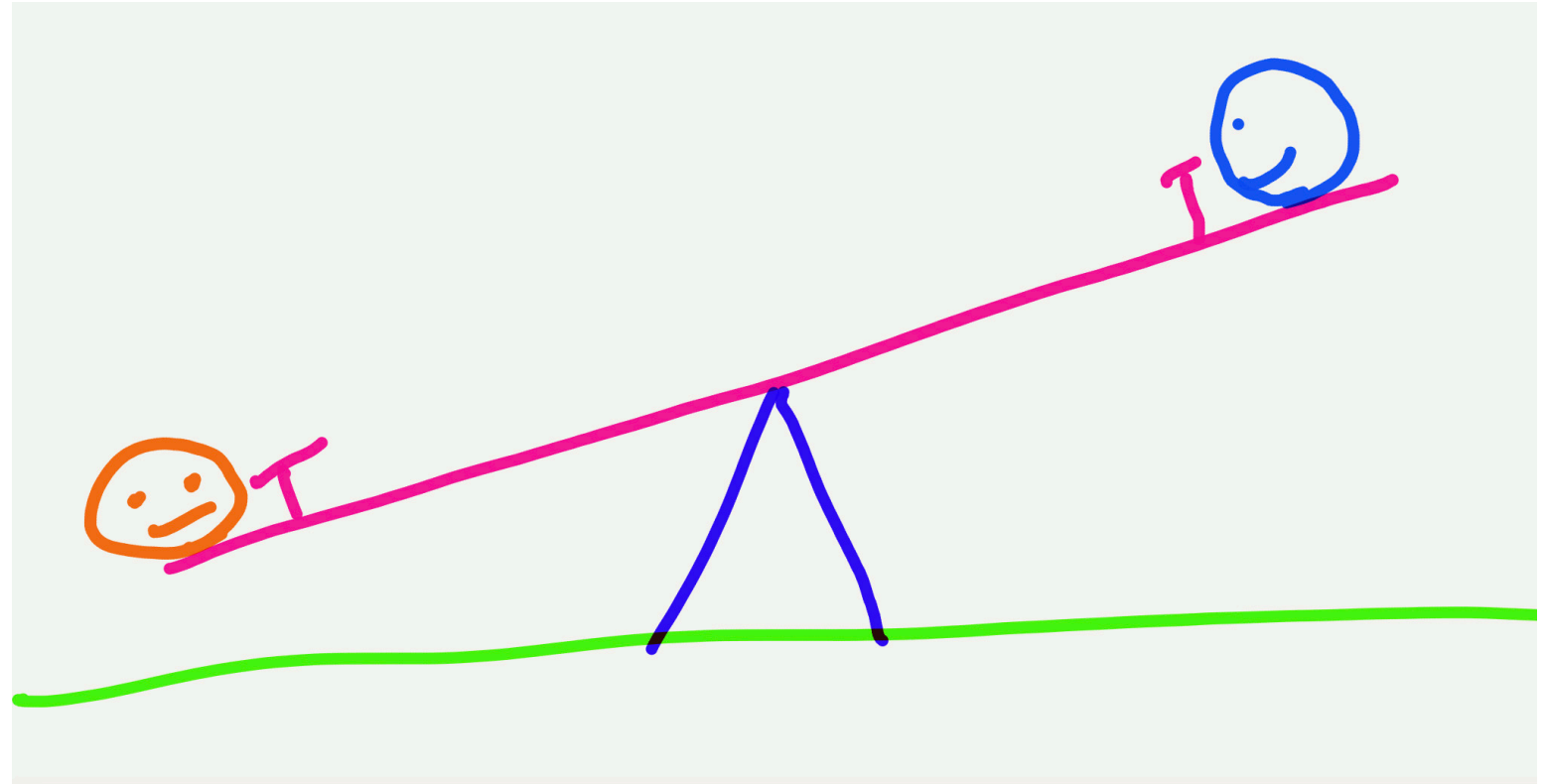
- Waller (1938): The Principle of Least Interest

That person is able to dictate the conditions of association whose interest in the continuation of the affair is least. (p.191).

- To extend to commitment:

The one who is least committed has the most power.

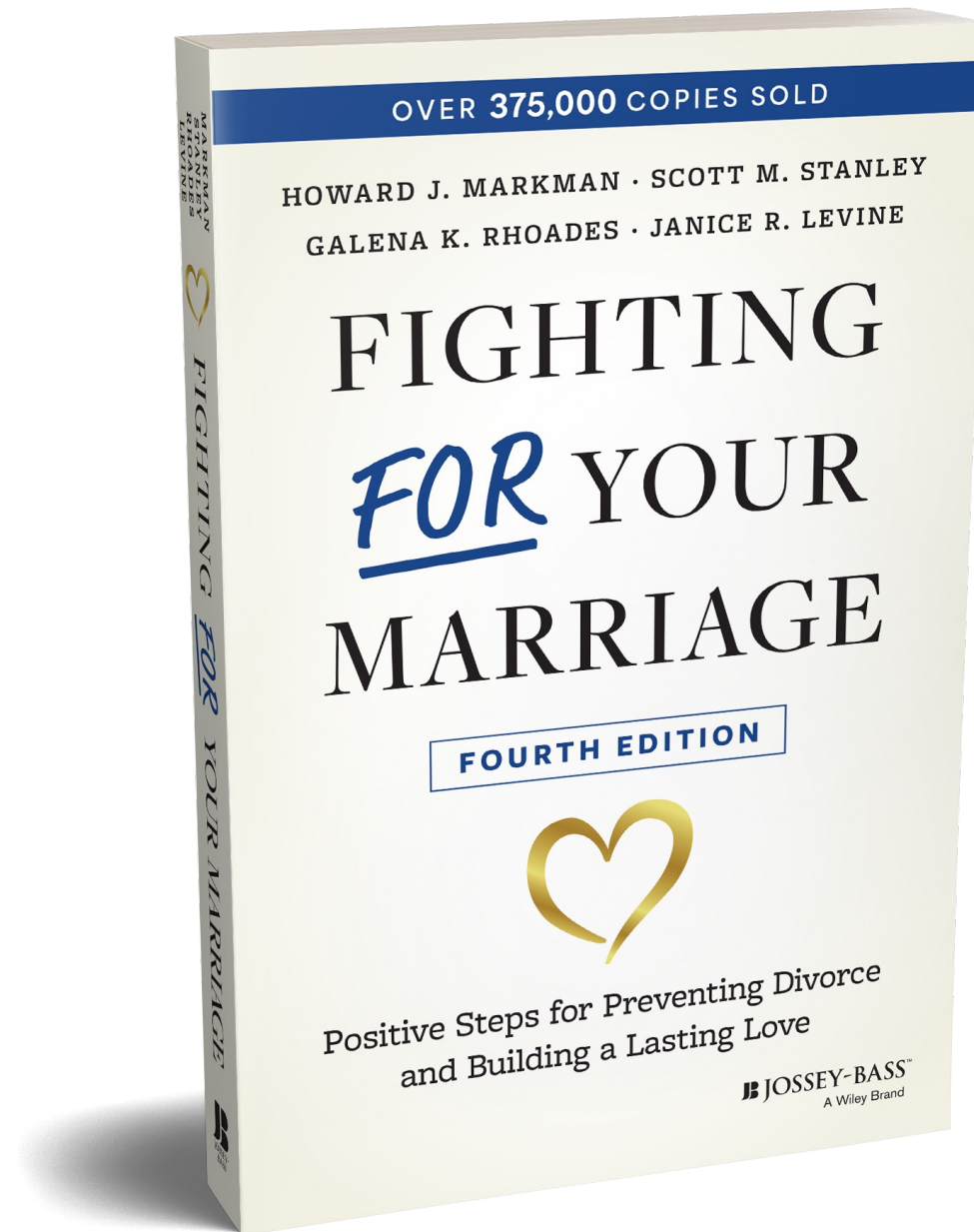
Asymmetrical Commitment



This issue affects:

- teens
- adults
- dating relationships
- cohabiting couples
- married couples

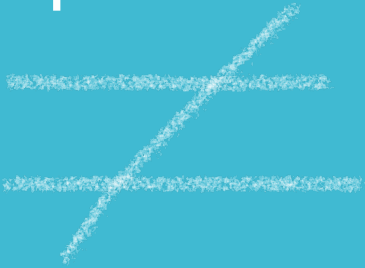
We even included a section on it in the new edition of our book.



Here, we focus on two types of findings from *our* work on this subject.

- Characteristics of relationships
- Characteristics of individuals

Asymmetrically Committed Couples



Stanley et al. (2017)
Rhoades et al. (2011)

- Definition: Partners differ by at least 1 standard deviation on commitment.
- Percentage of asymmetrical relationships:
 - 35% of serious but unmarried relationships
 - 46% of cohabiting relationships
- Men were more likely to be the less committed partner in both samples:
 - 23% vs 12% in serious but unmarried relationships
 - 29% vs 17% in cohabiting relationships

Relationship Status of Asymmetrically Committed Couples

Stanley et al. (2017)

Compared to couples in symmetrical relationships, asymmetrically committed couples were . . .

- . . . more likely to be cohabiting than dating.
- . . . less likely to have clarified a mutual commitment to marry.

The Timing of Cohabitation

Stanley et al. 2004
Rhoades et al. 2006
Rhoades et al. 2011

Starting to cohabit prior to marriage (especially if prior to being engaged) has been associated with greater odds of being asymmetrically committed.

Problems now and in the future

- Asymmetrical commitment predicts lower relationship quality and less relationship stability.
 - Lower relationship adjustment
 - Higher levels of conflict
 - More aggression between partners
 - Greater odds of breakup

Rhoades et al. (2011); Stanley et al. (2017)

- Asymmetrical commitment before marriage persists long into it.

Rhoades et al. (2006)

Perceived symmetry matters, too.

- Perceived similarity of being committed is associated with greater relationship adjustment.

e.g., Drigotas (1999); Sprecher, Schmeckle, and Felmlee (2006)

- Perceiving your partner as less committed than you are, at one or more time points before marriage, is associated with lower marital happiness.

Rhoades & Stanley (2014)

Characteristics of the *less* and *more* committed partners in ACRs

Stanley et al. (2019)

- *Less* committed partners are more likely to . . .
 - have parents who never married
(parental divorce is not associated with ACRs)
 - be more attachment avoidant
 - perceive themselves as having more alternative partners
- *More* committed partners are more likely to . . .
 - be more anxiously attached
 - have trouble depending on others

Q

Do you believe that asymmetrically committed relationships are more common now among couples who are seriously involved than in the past?

If YES, why would that be?

Some possibilities

- Ambiguity in relationships
- Loss of steps and stages
- Dating scene that may favor deception
- Low expectations



Helping to Prevent Asymmetrical Commitment

Citations

Stanley et al. 2017 has a good review of this literature and these concepts.

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Thank you for providing us feedback by completing this survey.

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October 9, 2024

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Karim Martinez, PhD

Dianne Christensen, Charlene Carr and Philip Alden

New Mexico State University Extension Services