

Friends and Lovers: The Role of Peer Relationships in Adolescent Romantic Relationships

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Psychologists have long been interested in the influence of parent-child relationships on subsequent relationships. Much less attention has been given to how friendships and peer relationships may also affect other relationships. Certainly, the critical contributions of peer relationships to psychosocial adjustment have been documented (see Hartup, 1983), but we know surprisingly little about their impact on other relationships.

Little has been said about the role peer relationships may play in the development of romantic relationships. Instead, contemporary conceptualizations of romantic relationships have focused principally on the role of parent-child relationships. For example, Shaver and Hazan (1988) proposed that early patterns of attachment with parents would predict patterns of attachment in adult romantic relationships, but they did not discuss the potential contributions of peer relationships.

In the present chapter, I consider how peer relationships may influence romantic relationships. In many respects, romantic relationships are a special type of peer relationship, but for current purposes, the term *peer relationships* refers to those relationships without a sexual or romantic component, whereas the term *romantic relationships* refers to those with sexual or romantic components. I believe most of the ideas presented here apply to both heterosexual and homosexual relationships, but almost no data exist on the latter, and thus this assertion is simply an assertion.

I present two general arguments for the importance of peer relationships in romantic relationships. In the first half of the chapter, I review the

evidence for an evolutionary basis for an affiliative behavioral system that plays an important role in peer and romantic relationships. I propose that we are biologically predisposed to affiliate with known peers, and that the affiliative competencies acquired in such interactions carry over into romantic relationships. In the second half of the chapter, I describe a series of empirical studies that provide evidence of three types of links between peer and romantic relationships. First, I show that *representations of friendships* may influence representations of romantic relationships. Second, I discuss how the peer group provides a *context* for establishing such heterosexual relationships. Third, I consider how romantic relationships are influenced by the *identity* of friends and peers.

AFFILIATIVE PROCESSES AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

In an earlier paper (Furman & Wehner, 1994), we offered a behavioral systems conceptualization of romantic relationships that attempted to integrate the insights of neo-Sullivanian and attachment theories. Specifically, we proposed that romantic partners typically become key figures in the functioning of the attachment, caregiving, sexual, and affiliative behavioral systems. This conceptualization is similar to Shaver and Hazan's (1988) model in which romantic love involves the integration of the attachment, caregiving, and sexual behavioral system. They did not, however, incorporate an affiliative system in their conceptualization. Such a system is particularly important for understanding the contributions peer relationships may play in romantic relationships.

In the sections that follow, I describe the role of the affiliative system and propose the following:

1. Humans are biologically predisposed to affiliate with known others.
2. These interactions with others were adaptive, in part, because they provided protection and cooperative food sharing. Affiliative behavior also provided juveniles opportunities for social play, which may have several functions.
3. Because they are relatively egalitarian in nature, relationships with peers provide particularly rich opportunities for cooperation, mutualism, reciprocal altruism, and social play.
4. Through such interactions, particularly those in friendships, one develops the capacities to cooperate, collaborate with another, and co-construct a relationship.
5. The affiliative competencies that develop in friendships carry over into romantic relationships. Similarly, representations of close friendships influence representations of romantic relationships.

Biological Bases of Affiliation

Human beings are predisposed to affiliate with known others. We are social animals, and have been throughout the course of evolution. Natural groups are characteristic of all humans (Foley, 1987). In fact, the catarhines from which hominids evolved 35 million years ago were already social in nature (Caporael, Dawes, Orbell, & van de Kragt, 1989). Pliocene hominids gathered in mixed gender and age groups at least 3 million years ago, and about a million years ago *Homo erectus* lived in small groups and hunted cooperatively. Early humans lived in territorial groups of 100 or less (Wilson, 1975). These groups consisted of a number of nuclear families. Different individuals were often related or behaved cooperatively as if they were "bands of brothers" (Wilson, 1975). Since that time, humans have organized into diverse forms of social groups, whose specific nature is influenced by environmental factors, but humans live in groups in almost all instances. Additionally, although humans interact with strangers, they prefer individuals whom they know. In fact, substantial evidence supports the idea that humans need frequent interactions within an ongoing caring relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Clearly, some individuals are more extroverted than others, and some of that difference is genetically based. Such genetic variability could occur if there were multiple adaptive peaks for sociability, which seems quite possible given the variability in niches in even the simplest society (Wilson, 1975). The fact that individuals vary in how sociable they are, however, is not inconsistent with the idea that humans are sociable in nature. The current proposition is simply that there is some biological predisposition to affiliate with known others. Individual differences are superimposed on top of that general predisposition.

Ethological Functions of Affiliation. What functions may affiliation have had for hominids on the savanna? One of the most common explanations is that hominid group living would serve a protective function. Isolated nonarboreal individuals on the savanna would be more vulnerable to predation than those in a group (Caporael et al., 1989; Dunbar, 1988; Foley, 1987). Additionally, hominids may have been more successful foraging for food cooperatively and then sharing the resources (Isaac, 1978). On the savanna, food would not be distributed evenly, but instead would be located in batches (e.g., an animal carcass or fruit tree). Accordingly, if a number of individuals were looking, such a batch would be more likely to be found than if only one person were looking, yet the costs of food sharing would not be high because a batch typically contained more food than one individual could eat. A group also would have been able to chase off other carnivores or scavengers who desired the meat that had been located.

Because of these selection pressures, individuals who were social and better able to function in a group would predominate (Caporael et al., 1989).

Some instances of food-seeking strategies, such as fighting off other predators together, are examples of mutualism (Wrangham, 1982); that is, the joint action results in immediate benefits to all parties. Other instances, such as giving away food to another person, fall into the category of reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971). There is no immediate benefit, but such behavior can be adaptive if there is an opportunity for subsequent reciprocity.

Trivers (1971) proposed that the chances of selection of such altruism are greatest under three conditions: (a) when individuals live a long lifetime so that there are many opportunities for the reciprocation of altruistic acts, (b) when the altruist interacts with the same small set of individuals, and (c) when the two are mutually dependent such that they gain relatively equivalent benefits from altruistic acts. These considerations may indicate why humans prefer to affiliate with known others. When interacting with someone they know, they have greater opportunities for the reciprocation of altruism; moreover, they have a history of experiences from which to judge whether the person does or does not reciprocate.

Trivers' three conditions are almost uniquely characteristic of hominids. Hominid groups were small and stable, such that individuals would have known the other members; in fact, they were typically related to many of them, which would also increase the adaptiveness of altruistic behavior. In contrast, members of most other species, including most primates, do not have enduring relationships, which may explain why reciprocal altruism is relatively rare except among hominids and a few primates (Wilson, 1975).

Not only does affiliation provide protection and opportunities for mutualism and reciprocal altruism, but it also provides juveniles with opportunities for play. Social play provides opportunities to practice caretaking and sexual behavior and to learn to modulate agonistic impulses appropriately (Konner, 1975). Play may also foster flexibility in the organism and provide opportunities for exploration or discovery (Fagan, 1981).

Attachment and Affiliation. The evolutionary roots of the affiliative and attachment system appear different (MacDonald, 1992). Attachment is characteristic of most primate species and some other mammals (Bowlby, 1969/1982). In contrast, most primates are not very social (Dunbar, 1988). Reciprocal altruism seems to be specific to hominids and perhaps a few other species of higher primates (Wilson, 1975).

Moreover, humans are likely to seek out different individuals depending upon which system is most activated. Infants turn to primary caretakers at times of distress, but at other, less stressful times, they prefer to play with peers, particularly known peers (Lewis, Young, Brooks, & Michalson, 1975;

Nash, 1988). Peers continue to be primary sources of companionship throughout childhood (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987).

A parent-child relationship also provides few opportunities for mutualism or reciprocal altruism because the relationship is asymmetrical; the joint actions of the two are not likely to be much more effective than the parent's actions alone; similarly, the child has few opportunities to perform altruistic acts for the parent (Trivers, 1971). On the other hand, friendships provide ideal opportunities for mutualism and reciprocal altruism. Friends are dependent on one another and often both benefit from joint actions. Additionally, relationships can last, but they can also be readily terminated if the other person does not reciprocate altruistic acts. In fact, Trivers (1971) suggested that the positive emotions entailed in friendships may emerge as a means of regulating a system of reciprocal altruism.

Social scientists have been wary of providing an evolutionary account of peer relationships, because children had few "peers" during much of our evolutionary past (Konner, 1975). For example, Konner (1975) estimated that in a band of 30 hunter-gatherers, the chance of having three or more peers was only 5.5%. By peers, however, Konner meant agemates (i.e., children born within 6 months of one another). If one broadens the definition to being born within 2 years, the probability of a group of at least four peers grows to 88%. Reciprocal altruism and mutualism should still occur among children who are relatively similar in age, even if they are not identical in age. Moreover, it is important to remember that adults have had peers throughout our evolutionary history. These relationships provide rich occasions for reciprocal altruism and mutualism because they would be symmetrical even if the adults were not identical in age. The opportunities for children to interact with agemates may not have existed in the past or in some societies, but this should not lead us to underestimate the general role of peer relations in our evolutionary history.

Although we distinguish between an attachment and affiliative system in our conceptualization, we do not mean to imply that they are unrelated to one another. The functioning of the attachment, affiliative, and other systems are expected to influence each other and to be coordinated with one another. As discussed subsequently, cognitive representations of relationships are thought to reflect an integration of experiences involving the various systems.

Affiliation in Peer Relationships

Prosocial behaviors do not originate in peer relationships alone, but the egalitarian nature of these relationships provide rich opportunities for reciprocity, cooperation, and reciprocal altruism. Through such interactions, individuals develop the capacity to cooperate, support one another, and co-construct a relationship.

Youniss (1980, 1986) provides a rich description of the development of reciprocity in friendships and peer relations. Before the age of 9 years, children engage in direct reciprocity. Positive behavior is responded to with positive behavior; negative behavior is responded to with negative behavior. When positive acts are reciprocated, children are friends; when negative acts are reciprocated, they are not. Relationships are defined in terms of the concrete interchanges and thus, are not very stable. Around the age of nine, children began to recognize that friendships transcend specific acts of positive reciprocity. Cooperation begins to be treated as a principle, and friendship is defined as a relationship that is sustained by cooperation. Children also emphasize the importance of treating their friends as equals. Certainly, they do not always act this way, but when the principle of equality is violated, they recognize remediation must occur if the friendship is to be sustained. In early adolescence, the principle of equality is expanded into a sense that friends have similar personalities and partially share an identity. They not only respond to each others' needs, but also come to one another with problems and concerns.

Children learn to co-construct or mutually develop a relationship through their interactions with peers. Play or conversation may be a means of developing a shared meaning or elaborating a mutual theme (Youniss, 1986). Because they are peers, neither child's ideas are inherently preferred or accepted; instead each must express his or her ideas or feelings and the two must work together to determine how to proceed. As a consequence, they learn interdependence and mutual respect. As they grow older, children become more effective in producing a joint reality through the relationship they mutually developed. A sense of mutuality or "we-ness" emerges.

Early relationships with caretakers play a critical role in the development of trust and the capacity for intimacy (Collins & Sroufe, in press), but such competencies are further developed in children's friendships. Intimacy and disclosure change from being unidirectional to mutual. Children not only learn how to turn to peers, but also how to listen and be supportive. The mutuality and intimacy of preadolescent friendships or chumships provide opportunities for consensual validation of one's worth (Sullivan, 1953).

Similarly, children's initial lessons in learning how to resolve conflicts occur in interactions with parents, but the interactions with peers provide new challenges. If they choose, parents can determine the outcome of a conflict, whereas the successful resolution of a conflict between peers usually requires negotiation on the part of both parties, as the participants are equal in status and power. Moreover, if the resolution is unsatisfactory to either participant, he or she has the option of ending the relationship. Consequently, coercive conflict strategies are minimized in friendships because of the voluntary nature of the relationship (Laursen, Hartup, & Koplak, 1996).

As these ideas concerning intimacy and conflict resolution illustrate, peer relationships and parent-child relationships are expected to have synergistic effects on development. Earlier experiences with parents influence children's peer relationships. At the same time, friendships and other peer relationships provide further opportunities for development, and the course of that development is not fully dictated by past experiences with parents.

Similarly, the cognitive representations children have concerning friendships are expected to be influenced by representations of their experiences with parents, but they may also be influenced by experiences in friendships (Furman & Wehner, 1994).

The Carryover Into Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships and friendships share many affiliative features. In fact, when asked to describe their romantic relationships, college students describe the friendship aspects of the relationship almost twice as often as any other aspect, including passion (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993). Almost half said their best friend was their romantic partner. Romantic theorists' concepts of companionate love (Berscheid & Walster, 1974), storge (Lee, 1976), and friendship-based love (Grote & Frieze, 1994) all emphasize companionship, intimacy, and mutuality.

Affiliative features may be particularly salient in adolescence, as romantic partners are not usually expected to be primary attachment figures until late adolescence or adulthood (Furman & Wehner, 1994). In interviews of 15-year-olds, the most frequently reported advantages of having a dating partner were companionship, intimacy, and support (Feiring, 1996).

Because romantic relationships have such affiliative characteristics, the competencies underlying reciprocity, co-construction of a relationship, validation of worth, and intimacy are likely to be important in the development of romantic relationships as well as friendships. Thus, experiences in childhood peer relationships serve as one of the foundations for the development of the affiliative competencies that are central in romantic relationships. By the same line of reasoning, individual differences in such competencies influence one's attractiveness as a romantic partner. In fact, one of the strongest predictors of interpersonal attraction is the general characteristic of agreeableness, which includes attributes such as being cooperative, kind, and sympathetic (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, Todd, & Finch, *in press*).

Differences in affiliative competencies are also expected to predict differences in the characteristics of one's romantic relationships. The necessary longitudinal research does not exist to determine causality, but affiliative features distinguish different romantic relationship styles. For example, those with secure romantic styles are higher in mutuality and

ouple orientation than those with anxious-ambivalent or avoidant styles (Feeney & Noller, 1991). Enjoyment and friendship are higher in secure individuals than anxious-ambivalents. Finally, differences in cognitive representations of peer relationships are expected to lead to differences in representations of romantic relationships, a topic discussed more extensively in the section that follows.

In summary, I have outlined the case for a biological basis for an affiliative system and suggested that affiliative competencies may develop in peer relationships and carry over into romantic relationships. Portions of the evolutionary argument are admittedly speculative and difficult to test empirically. At the same time, developmental theorists need to give greater consideration to the potential role that selection pressures may have played in the emergence of peer and romantic relationships. It is hoped that the presentation of these ideas will stimulate further work on the affiliative system and its potential role in peer relationships.

LINKS BETWEEN THE REPRESENTATIONS OF FRIENDSHIPS AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Whereas the preceding section principally stemmed from the ethological literature, the next section considers developmental studies that provide another basis for suggesting that peers play an important role in the development of romantic relationships. Three potential roles are considered.

In this section, I illustrate how *representations of friendships* may influence representations of romantic relationships. In the sections that follow, I describe how the peer group provides a *context* for establishing heterosexual relationships, and how romantic relationships are influenced by the *identity* of friends and peers.

Perceptions of Support

As part of an earlier study (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), we examined children and adolescents' perceptions of their social networks. Students completed the Network of Relationships Inventory in which they rated the degree to which they received seven different types of support from their mothers, fathers, closest siblings, grandparents, closest same-sex friends, and romantic partners. The original report of this study focused on age and gender differences, but reanalyses of the data on the 112 tenth graders provide information about the similarities and differences among adolescents' relationships and the links between them.

The first set of new analyses examined the kinds of support that were sought in different relationships. In order to obtain a common metric for

comparing different types of support, scores for each type of support were standardized. Figure 7.1 depicts the support obtained from romantic partners, friends, and parents. The kinds of support obtained from friends and romantic partners were similar to each other, and differed from those obtained from either parent. Adolescents commonly turned to friends and romantic partners for intimacy and companionship, whereas affection, instrumental aid, and a sense of reliable alliance were the more salient features in relationships with parents. This pattern of results is consistent with the idea that friendships and romantic relationships serve similar, though not identical, functions; affiliative features are particularly salient in both.

The next analyses examined the links among the four relationships. Overall indices of support were derived by averaging the scores of the seven support provisions for each relationship. Perceptions of support in relationships with best friends, mothers, and fathers were all significantly correlated with perceptions of support in romantic relationships (r 's = .36 to .43, p 's < .01). To examine the contributions of different relationships in predicting support in romantic relationships, we conducted iterative multiple regression analyses in which the order of entry of predictors was varied. Support in best friendships provided an increment in prediction

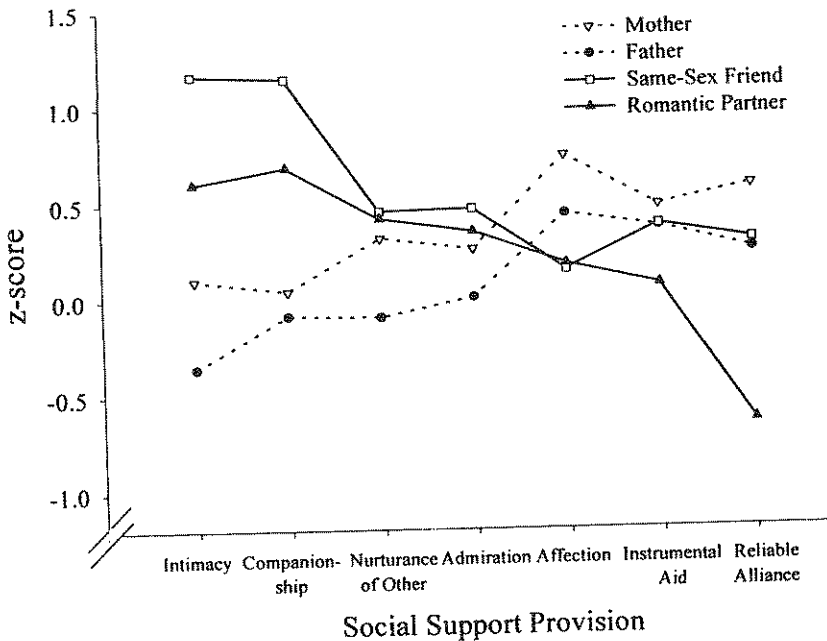


FIG. 7.1. Mean amount of social support provided by romantic partners, friends, and parents.

at obtained from the two parent-adolescent relationships (parents' , friend increment $R^2 = .04$, each step $p < .05$). Similarly, the two adolescent relationships provided an increment above that obtained st friendships (friend $R^2 = .15$, parents increment $R^2 = .09$, each .05). Thus, both types of relationships provided unique contribu- the prediction of support in romantic relationships, but much of icted variance was shared ($R^2 = .11$). Connolly and Johnson (1996) l a similar pattern of results, although the links were attenuated e romantic relationships were of a year or longer in duration. : studies are cross-sectional in nature, but the patterns of relations o examined in a 3-year longitudinal study of approximately 180 ool students (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 1997). Network of ships Inventories were completed in Grades 9, 10, and 11. Ratings ort in best friendships were predictive of ratings of support in : relationships a year later ($r = .37$, $p < .01$); support in romantic hips was not predictive of support in best friendships during the ent year ($r = .14$, n.s.). Unfortunately, this study did not examine of relationships with parents.

al Styles

udies were concerned with perceptions of support, but we also mined perceptions of the different behavioral systems salient in tionships (i.e., attachment, caretaking, affiliation, and, in the case tic relationships, sexuality). Adult attachment researchers com- aracterize conscious attachment styles as secure, dismissing, or ied. We believe that this framework can be applied to the other al systems, and that one can refer to secure, dismissing, or pre- relational styles (Furman & Simon, in press; Furman & Wehner, or example, a person with a secure style for romantic relationships only think that he or she should be able to turn to a partner at distress, but also may value taking care of the other, may desire energy into constructing a mutual relationship, and may value tionate and caring elements of sexuality. Someone with a preoc- yle may not only find it difficult to feel comforted by a partner set, but may also be too worried about a partner's problems (i.e., ve caretaking), may overinvest in relationships in a self-sacrificing and may construe sexual behavior as a way to make oneself feel omeone with a dismissing style may have little interest in care- ttle investment in a relationship, and see sex as an opportunity imentation or self-gratification, as well as not see a partner as rn to at times of distress. Thus, we believe that individuals have representations or relational styles that refer to all four behavioral

systems. In effect, such styles are conscious expectations regarding intimacy and closeness, which may be enacted in terms of attachment, caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation.

Perceptions of different relationship styles were examined in a sample of 165 high school females, who were predominantly Caucasian and middle class (Furman & Wehner, 1994; Wehner, 1992). A Behavioral Systems Questionnaire was developed to assess conscious perceptions of attachment, care received, and affiliation in relationships with mothers, fathers, friends, and romantic partners. Perceptions of sexuality in romantic relationships, and care provided to friends and romantic partners were also assessed. Separate scales assessed secure, dismissing, and preoccupied styles for each of the behavioral systems. The corresponding attachment, care received, and affiliative scales for each of the three styles were found to be substantially correlated with one another in each of the four relationships (mean $r = .51$). This finding is consistent with the idea that representations of different systems are coordinated or integrated, such that they can be conceptualized as relational styles. General relational scores for secure, preoccupied and dismissing styles were calculated by standardizing and averaging the scores for the three different behavioral systems measured in all relationships. The pattern of relations among the styles for different relationships was then examined.

As shown in Table 7.1, high school students' friendship and romantic relational styles were consistently related to one another. Analyses of the specific behavioral system scales revealed consistent links, particularly for the affiliation and care scales (M attachment $r = .18$, caregiving received $r = .33$, care provided $r = .40$, affiliation $r = .45$). In contrast, relational style scores for parents and romantic relationships were less related, as were the specific behavioral system scales (M attachment $r = .00$, caretaking $r = .17$, affiliation $r = .18$) Interestingly, styles for relationships with parents were more related to those for friendships than to those for romantic relationships.

TABLE 7.1
Across Relationship Correlations for General Relationship Styles

<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Secure</i>	<i>Dismissing</i>	<i>Preoccupied</i>
Friends–Romantic	.25**	.35**	.40**
Mother–Romantic	.02	.01	.23**
Father–Romantic	.07	.18*	.08
Mother–Friends	.14	.25**	.28**
Father–Friends	.16*	.25**	.26**
Mother–Father	.29**	.35**	.39**

Note. From Furman and Wehner (1994). Reprinted with permission of Sage Publications.
** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

A series of iterative regression analyses were conducted to examine the role of parent and friend styles in predicting romantic styles. The three style scores for friends each provided an increment above that obtained from the corresponding scores for the two parents (secure increment $R^2 = .06$, dismissing increment $R^2 = .10$, preoccupied increment $R^2 = .13$, all p 's < .01). Entering the pairs of parent styles after the corresponding friend style did not significantly improve the prediction of any of the three romantic styles (all R^2 's < .03, n.s.).

Working Models

The preceding results focused on individual's self-perceptions of relational styles. Although such styles are sometimes equated with working models, these two components of cognitive representations of relationships should be distinguished (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Styles are conscious self-perceptions of approaches to relationships, whereas working models refer to internalized, partially unconscious, representations of relationships, which reflect more automated processing in relationships. Styles can be measured by self-report measures of relationships, such as various romantic attachment questionnaires or the Behavioral Systems Questionnaire described previously. Working models (or states of mind) can be assessed through the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Caplan, & Main, 1985) or derivatives of it designed to assess marriages (Crowell & Owens, 1996; Silver & Cohn, 1992). Styles and working models may differ because some individuals, particularly dismissing ones, may overtly present themselves or their relationships positively as a means of defending against underlying negative models of self and relationships (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). Consistent with these ideas, working models of parental relationships have been found to be relatively unrelated to self-report ratings of relationships with parents (Crowell et al., 1993).

To examine the links among working models of different relationships, Elizabeth Wehner and I developed interviews for friendships and romantic relationships that were analogous to the Adult Attachment Interview. The three interviews were administered to 54 high school females from the sample previously described. Using Kobak's (1993) Q-sort methodology, multiple coders read transcripts of each interview and sorted 72 to 100 descriptors into nine categories ranging from very characteristic to very uncharacteristic. The descriptors focused on interview discourse and attachment-related features of the relationships. In pilot work, we included affiliation items and found them to be high related to the attachment indices. These Q-sorts of items were correlated with Kobak's prototypic Q-sorts to yield scores for security of attachment (vs. insecurity) and for deactivation or dismissing of attachment (vs. hyperactivation or preoccupied with attachment).

The pattern of correlations among the working model scores for the three relationships resembled that found with our stylistic measures. Ratings of security in friendships and romantic relationships were significantly related ($r = .47, p < .01$), as were friendship and romantic ratings of deactivation of attachment ($r = .39, p < .01$). Furthermore, 50% of the items in the set of friendship descriptors were significantly related to their corresponding romantic relationship descriptors, including various descriptions of coherence, insight, and availability of partners.

Correlations between parental relationships and romantic relationships were in the right direction, but nonsignificant (security $r = .26$, deactivation $r = .21$, both n.s.). Only 5% of the items in the parent Q-sort were related to corresponding items in the romantic relationship Q-sort. Ratings for relationships with parents and friendships, however, were significantly related (security $r = .34$, deactivation $r = .32, p's < .05$).

Iterative regression analyses revealed that each of the friendship scores provided a significant increment in the prediction of romantic scores above that obtained from the corresponding scores for relationships with parents (secure increment $R^2 = .20$, deactivating increment $R^2 = .19$, both $p's < .01$). Neither of the two scores for relationships with parents provided a significant prediction increment above that obtained from the corresponding friendship ratings alone ($R^2's < .02$, n.s.).

Accounting for the Links

Taken together, the findings from these studies provide initial evidence that representations of friendships and romantic relationships are related. Both friendships and romantic relationships are egalitarian peer relationships, but the strength of the links in the representations of the two does not simply stem from similarity in the overt characteristics of the relationships. Such an explanation would not account for the findings concerning the correspondence in working models, nor could it explain the correspondence between representations of relationships with parents and friends, which do not share such similar overt features. The significant findings also cannot be attributed to method variance, because the pattern of relations among the scores for the three relationships was not uniform. Instead, the correspondence seems to reflect linkages in the representations of these relationships.

Representations of friendships may mediate a link between views of relationships with parents and those with romantic partners. The observed links between representations of parents and friends and those between representations of friends and romantic partners are consistent with this explanation. At the same time, the mediator explanation is not a sufficient account of the relations as representations of friendships typically accounted for additional variance in the prediction of romantic repre-

representations after controlling for representations of relationships with parents. Representations of friendships appear to be important in and of themselves and not just as mediators.

Although the results are encouraging, further work is needed to identify the specific nature of the links. The extent to which the observed links are reflected in or mediated by overt patterns of interaction requires examination. Additionally, some of the findings suggest that affiliative processes may be particularly important, but these results are tentative. In a related vein, the findings are consistent with the ethological arguments presented in the first section of the paper, but the links could be readily accounted for by other explanations that emphasize social learning processes or culture-specific influences.

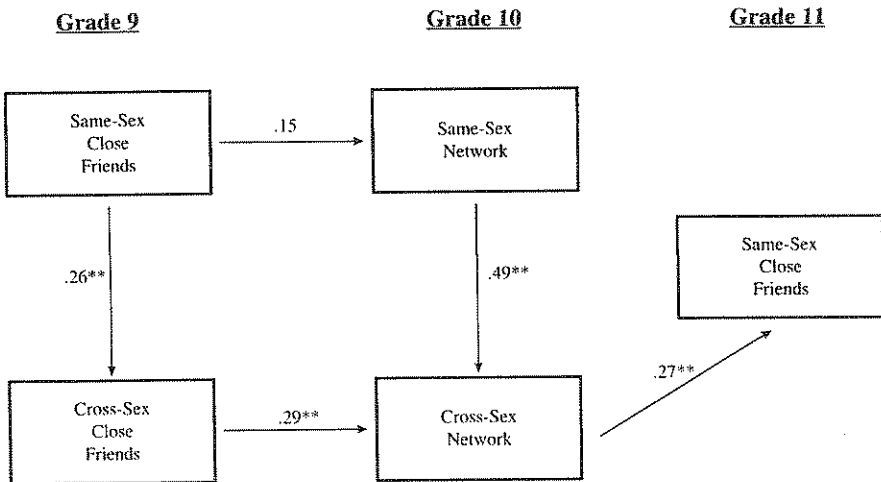
THE PEER GROUP AS A CONTEXT OR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

The preceding section considered how representations of friendships may be linked to similar representations of romantic relationships. Another way the peer group may influence romantic relationships is by serving as a setting or context for the emergence of heterosexual romantic relationships. Such a role is described in Dunphy's (1963) developmental model of adolescent peer groups. In the first stage, unisexual cliques emerge, consisting of four or six close friends. In the second stage, male cliques and female cliques begin to socialize in a large group context or crowd, marking a step toward heterosexual relationships. In the third stage, the leaders or popular members of each clique begin to date each other, forming a heterosexual clique. In the fourth stage, the peer crowd is fully developed as several heterosexual cliques closely associate with one another. Finally, males and females begin to develop couple relationships; the crowd begins to disintegrate, leaving loosely associated groups of couples.

Dunphy's model was based on case studies, but his ideas have received some empirical support. Adolescents with romantic relationships report larger peer networks and more other-gender friends (Connolly & Johnson, 1996). Rejected and neglected adolescents date less frequently than others (Ranzoi, Davis, & Vasquez-Suson, 1994).

The Connolly et al. (1997) longitudinal study described previously provided the opportunity to further test some of Dunphy's ideas. Data were gathered on the number of same and other-gender reciprocated friendships and the number of same- and other-gender peers in an adolescent's general network. Like Dunphy, we hypothesized that cliques of reciprocated friends would precede the emergence of larger networks or "crowds." Furthermore, we thought that participation in same-gender groups would

lead to participation in other-gender groups, which in turn would lead to heterosexual romantic relationships. These ideas lead us to propose the model depicted in Fig. 7.2, which was tested using structural equation modeling. Because LISREL is limited in its ability to process dichotomous variables, we did not examine the simple presence or absence of a romantic relationship, but instead measured the amount of companionship with a romantic partner using the Network of Relationships Inventory scores (individuals without such a relationship received scores of 0). The model provided a good fit to the data ($X^2(5) = 9.80$, n.s.). The fit was not satisfactory for alternative models in which the direction of effects from the same- to other-gender variables was reversed, or the temporal sequence of friendship cliques and networks was reordered ($X^2(5)$'s > 12 , p 's $< .05$). These findings not only suggest that the peer group serves as context for developing heterosexual romantic relationships, but they also underscore the importance of other-gender relationships. In part, these other-gender relationships may be important because a heterosexual romantic relationship may develop out of other-gender relationships or out of contacts made through such a relationship. These relationships may also provide adolescents with opportunities to learn about the other gender and to learn how to interact with the other gender in a context in which sexuality is constrained. Relationships with other-gender siblings may play a similar role, as young adults with older other-gender siblings have more rewarding interactions with other-gender strangers (Ickes & Turner, 1983).



Note. Values shown on arrows are standardized parameter estimates.
** $p < .01$.

FIG. 7.2. Structural model of peer network variables and romantic companionship.

Finally, it is important to note that the contextual role of the peer group is distinct from the previously discussed role that friendships and other close relationships play in shaping representations of romantic relationships. The structural characteristics of the peer network are associated with whether one has a romantic relationship or not, but other analyses revealed that they are not very related to the supportiveness of that romantic relationship. Similarly, in the studies described in the prior section, relational styles and working models were not very related to the age one began to date or the number of individuals dated. Thus, the nature of one's peer network and one's status in that network seem to play a more important role in determining the *timing* and *extensiveness* of dating than do past relationship experiences (within some limits). Past relationship experiences, however, are expected to have a big impact on the *quality* of the romantic relationships that develop, whenever they do develop (Furman & Wehner, 1994).

THE IDENTITY OF PEERS AND FRIENDS

The identity of one's peers and friends, as well as the quality and number of peer relationships, may affect the nature of one's romantic relationships. Research on sexual behavior illustrates these influences. For example, age at first intercourse is related to perceptions of peers' attitudes about sexual behavior (Daughtery & Burger, 1984) and perceptions of friends' sexual activity (Schulz, Bohrnstedt, Borgatta, & Evans, 1977). Caucasian adolescents, particularly women, tend to have friends whose level of sexual activity is similar to their own (Billy, Rodgers, & Udry, 1984; Billy & Udry, 1985). Concordance between friends could occur as a function of whom one chooses as friends or through the socialization influences of friends. In the one longitudinal study conducted to date (Billy & Udry, 1985), both Caucasian males and females chose friends whose sexual behavior was similar to their own, and females' sexual behavior was influenced by their existing friends' sexual activity.

Not only do peers transmit values, but they are also a major source of information about numerous topics, including sex (Thornburg, 1975). How knowledgeable one's peers are, as well as how much they communicate such information, may affect how accurately informed adolescents are. Aside from this work on sexuality, little empirical work exists on how the identity of one's friends may influence adolescent romantic relationships. Such influences seem likely, however, as the identity of friends influences psychosocial adjustment in general (see Hartup, 1996).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The results of these studies provide encouraging support for the general thesis that peer relations may play an important role in the development of romantic relationships. A number of issues, however, require further consideration.

First, this chapter has principally discussed how friendships or other aspects of peer relations may affect romantic relationships, rather than the reverse. The longitudinal data presented here are consistent with this interpretation, but romantic relationships are also likely to affect friendships or parent-adolescent relationships. For example, competencies acquired or honed in the romantic relationships may carry over to other relationships. In particular, the affiliative competencies of reciprocity, mutual intimacy, and co-construction may ultimately be applied in relationships with parents and contribute to the transformation of those relationships into more symmetrical ones (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The make-up of peer networks is also likely to change as romantic relationships develop. Romantic partners may introduce adolescents to new peers and may remain part of the network themselves even after the romantic relationship has dissolved. In our longitudinal study (Connolly et al., 1997), approximately 20% were part of the adolescents' peer networks a year later.

Finally, one of the major themes of ours' and other attachment theorists' conceptualizations is that romantic partners become central attachment, affiliative, and caretaking figures (Furman & Wehner, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1988). As they become central figures, romantic partners may begin to fulfill some of the roles played by other individuals and thus, change the nature of relationships with those individuals. A new romantic partner is a common source of strain in adolescent friendships. Adolescents with romantic relationships interact with their friends less (Laursen & Williams, 1997) and seem less interested in them. Often, in fact, the new romantic partner becomes the best friend, displacing the old friend (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993). Dating and romantic relationships may also influence the nature of parent-adolescent relationships, as they are indices of the developing autonomy of the adolescent. They can also be a major source of conflict between parents and their adolescents, as many parents will testify.

These descriptions of the potential impact of romantic relationships on other relationships also illustrate the complexity of the links between relationships. In the studies reported here, positive correlations were found between representations of romantic relationships and friendships. Such positive links are consistent with the idea that carryover in competencies or interpersonal approaches occurs. At the same time, some research suggests that adolescents with romantic partners interact less with friends than

those without a romantic partner (Laursen & Williams, 1997). Thus, peer relationships may provide adolescents the competencies for interacting with romantic partners and serve as a context for establishing such relationships, but they and romantic relationships may compete for the adolescents' time and attention (Zani, 1993). Romantic partners may even replace or serve as a substitute for friends. The specific type of peer influence also depends on their attitudes toward a particular romantic relationship or toward romantic relationships in general. Thus, communication with and support from the partner's peers can sustain a romantic relationship (Parks & Adelman, 1983), whereas their disapproval may lead to its demise. In some male peer groups, women in general are considered to be objects for sexual conquest, and most ongoing or serious relationships are ridiculed (Alexander, 1990).

Similarly, most adolescent heterosexual peer groups strongly discourage gay or lesbian relationships, and relatively few sexual minority youth have the opportunity to be part of a group of adolescents with the same sexual orientation (Diamond, Savin-Williams, & Dube, in press). Thus, although many of the ideas in this chapter are thought to be applicable to gay or lesbian relationships, one important difference is in the attitudes most adolescents have toward such relationships. Another difference may be in the role played by passionate same-gender friendships—friendships that have the intensity of a romantic relationship, but lack the sexual element (Diamond et al., in press). Such relationships may serve as an important context for clarifying the sexual identity of sexual minority youth, and may fulfill needs traditionally met by romantic relationships without involving undesired sexual behavior with the other sex. Accordingly, experiences in such passionate friendships may be important factors in the development of subsequent gay or lesbian romantic relationships.

Although we have focused on the role of friendships and peer relationships, relationships with parents also play a critical role. An important task for subsequent work is to identify how each relationship contributes to the development of romantic relationships (i.e., what the unique function of each is and what functions are shared). For example, one would expect experiences with both relationships to be related to the general development of trust or mistrust, but peers may play a particularly important role in learning how to trust and be trustworthy in a symmetrical relationship—e.g., how to both disclose and be responsive to disclosures.

This chapter is concerned with the continuities across relationships, but it is important to recognize that the observed links are moderate in size. The correlations could be attenuated by measurement error, but lawful discontinuities should be expected as well. Just as friendships present new challenges and experiences to children, so too do romantic relationships (Furman & Flanagan, 1997). The most obvious is the element of sexuality.

Sheer physical attraction plays an important role in determining whom we are interested in establishing a relationship with and the nature of the interactions that occur in that relationship (Berscheid, 1988). Additionally, romantic relationships also involve the attachment, caretaking, and affiliative systems as well as the sexual system, whereas previous relationships typically have not involved all of these systems. Marriages and other long-term romantic relationships also have the elements of commitment, exclusivity, and usually parenting that pose new developmental challenges. Finally, the other person is different in each relationship and they too shape the nature of the interchanges.

In summary, the specific nature of the links among various relationships will require further empirical work, but the general structure of the answer is already predictable. Each of these relationships will turn out to be important developmental contexts. The influence of friends, parents, and romantic partners will prove to be synergistic—overlapping, but not interchangeable. Each of these themes are ones that Bill Hartup has long emphasized (Hartup, 1980).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preparation of this manuscript was supported by Grant 50106 from National Institute of Mental Health. Portions of the research presented here were done in collaboration with Duane Buhrmester, Jennifer Connolly, Roman Konarski, and Elizabeth Wehner. Bill Hartup's influence in the development of the ideas in this paper greatly exceeds the specific citations of his work.

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