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Chapter 3

The Changing Functions of Friends in Childhood: A Neo-Sullivanian Perspective

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Although friendships are important throughout the lifespan, they seem to be particularly important during middle childhood and adolescence. Prior to this time, parents command center stage; after this period, heterosexual relationships become the primary concern. By examining friendship as it develops into a significant form of relationship during this period, we hope to shed light on the functional importance of friendship. In particular, we consider three ways that friends contribute to social development and adjustment: (a) the fulfillment of interpersonal needs, (b) the socialization of interpersonal competence, and (c) the provision of natural therapeutic experiences. Our approach is developmental in that we trace the path by which friendship grows to its mature form. It is also comparative in that we consider the *relative* role of friendship within the child's broad network of relationships.

The work of Sullivan (1953) is our theoretical point of departure. His theory represents an ambitious attempt to account for personality development within the context of interpersonal relations. Unfortunately, his contribution has remained largely overlooked because his written works are poorly organized and often confusing. We begin with an overview of those aspects of his developmental model relevant to the functions of friendship. In order to systematize Sullivan, we often extend his reasoning to fill in gaps left by his failure to follow-through on certain conceptual themes. Thus, our model is really neo-Sullivanian. The discussion of the model is followed by a selective review of research concerning the changing functions of childhood friendships.

Sullivan's Theory of Social–Personality Development

Basic Concepts

A central concept in Sullivan's perspective on personality is that of the *interpersonal situation*. He believed that people are motivated to bring about

certain desirable types of interpersonal situations and avoid other types. He postulated that there are five basic *social needs*: tenderness, coparticipation in playful activity, acceptance by others, interpersonal intimacy, and sexual contact. Underlying these needs are motivational tensions roughly equivalent to the negative emotions of fear, loneliness, ostracism, boredom, and anxiety. These tensions, which find their initial roots in human biology, encourage people to create desired interpersonal situations. The attainment of these situations not only eliminates unpleasant affective tensions, but also prompts the positive emotional rewards of security, love, and feelings of self-esteem.

Most contemporary psychologists are likely to find Sullivan's concept of "need" to be a bit mysterious and outdated. Although emotional tensions and social behavior may be linked, Sullivan's attempt to explain social motivation in terms of underlying tensions is certainly an oversimplistic account of complex motivational processes. Nevertheless, the general concept of *social needs* has considerable appeal as a heuristic way to describe certain social-motivational processes. In particular, the concept of needs can be used to refer to preferences for one type of activity over alternative ones. These preferences can be inferred by observing choice behavior, whether it be verbal statements of choice or actual selections. These preferences are not static, but they vary in relative strength as a function of numerous factors, such as the alternative activities available and how long it has been since the preferred interaction last occurred. The concept of need also implies that once persons have engaged in the preferred activity, the strength of their preference for that activity tends to decrease; that is, the desire for the activity is temporarily satiated. In the present chapter, the term *social needs* is used to refer to preferred types of interactions and *need fulfillment* to the achievement of preferred activities with a resulting reduction in preference strength.

Developmental Concepts

Sullivan's greatest contribution to the field of developmental psychology was his description of normal social-personality development. He believed that from birth on children's personalities are shaped by relationships with parents, school authorities, siblings, and peers. He viewed the overriding task of healthy psychosocial development to be the growth of patterns of behavior and ego defenses that allow children to fulfill interpersonal needs while keeping anxiety within bounds. This rich account of normal development served as the basis for explaining the deviations that lead to pathology.

Figure 3-1 outlines the major stages of Sullivan's developmental model. Five of his developmental stages, or *epochs*, are listed. Because Sullivan defined his stages in terms of psychosocial events rather than chronological age, the age range given for each epoch is only approximate. The beginning

EMERGENT NEEDS AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS	INFANCY (0 to 2 yrs.)	CHILDHOOD (2 to 6 yrs.)	JUVENILE ERA (6 to 9 yrs.)	PREADOLESCENCE (9 to 12 yrs.)	EARLY ADOLESCENCE (12 to 16 yrs.)
SEXUALITY					Opposite-sex Partner
INTIMACY				Same-sex Friend	Opposite-sex Friend/Romance / Same-sex Friend
ACCEPTANCE			Peer Society	Friendship Gang	Heterosexual Crowd / Friendship Gang
COMPANIONSHIP		Parents	Compeers / Parents	Same-sex Friend / Parents	Opposite-sex Friend/Romance / Same-sex Friend
TENDERNESS	Parents		Parents	Same-sex Friend / Parents	Opposite-sex Friend/Romance / Same-sex Friend

Figure 3-1. Neo-Sullivanian model of emerging social needs and key relationships. During each developmental period (columns) a new need emerges (stairsteps) and is fulfilled by the key relationships (rows).

of each stage is marked by an *emerging social need* that is added to the expanding list of desired forms of interpersonal situations. (Even though Sullivan described the emergence of social needs as the force that determines the pace of social-personality development, he never provided a coherent explanation of the factors that control the timing of the appearance of new needs.) The stair-step organization of Figure 3.1 is meant to represent the cumulative nature of emerging social needs, in that new needs are added to existing ones rather than replacing them.

Sullivan's description of needs as "emerging" or "arising" during development may be misleading because it implies that children move from a state of not preferring a type of interaction to a point of suddenly desiring it. Such discontinuities in development are seldom observed. Rather, preferences for different social activities change over an extended period. There may, however, be periods of rapid increase in the strength of preferences. These periods of rapid change are probably what Sullivan described as times in which needs emerged.

Figure 3-1 also outlines the *key relationships* that are most crucial for need fulfillment during each developmental period. In some cases, a newly emergent need prompts the establishment of a new type of relationship; for example, in early adolescence the appearance of the sexual drive promotes cross-sex relationships. In other cases, the satisfaction of the emergent need d into a previously established type of relationship; for eed for playmate companionship is initially satisfied within

the context of the well-established parent–child relationship. In still other cases, the satisfaction of a previously established need is met in new types of relationships; for example, although parents start out as the key providers of companionship in childhood, the key companions become the peer group, same-sex friends, and finally opposite-sex peers in subsequent stages.

These key relationships are also the contexts in which particular *interpersonal competencies* are learned (see Table 3-1). Although Sullivan did not sytematically delineate this theme, we believe that social competence develops through a process similar to the development of other skills (Fischer, 1980). In particular, social competencies develop through experiences in interactions that require these competencies. Interactions vary in their structural properties (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and, thus, different types of interactions require different social competencies. When children encounter a type of interaction that is structurally novel and beyond their current skill level, they are pressed to expand their competence to the level demanded by the new social task. Competence in each domain of social skill grows gradually as higher levels of skill are built by accommodating and intercoordinating existing competencies (cf. Weinstein, 1969).

Table 3-1. Structured Interpretation of Sullivan's Model of Socioemotional Development

Developmental Stage	Emerging Needs/Key Relationships	Interpersonal Competencies	Developmental Arrests	Focal Emotions
Infancy (0 to 2 yrs.)	Tenderness/ Parents	Coordinated responding	Insecure attachment	Distress & fear/ security
Childhood (2 to 6 yrs.)	Companionship/ Parents	Compliance and assertion	Cycle of isolation and malevolent transformation	Isolation & boredom/ Enjoyment & amusement
Juenile era (5 to 9 yrs.)	Acceptance/ Peer society	Cooperation, compromise, and competition	Peer group ostracism and disparagement of others	Ostracism & rejection/Social pride & self-worth
Preadolescence (9 to 12 yrs.)	Intimacy/ Same-sex friend	Collaboration: Perspective-taking, empathy, and altruism	Lonely, isolation	Loneliness/Love
Early adolescence (12 to 16 yrs.)	Sexuality/ Opposite-sex partner	Balancing intimacy, sexuality and anxiety	Confused sexuality	Sexual frustration/ Lust

Because relationships with different network members are characterized by different types of interactions (Furman & Buhrmester, in press), each relationship requires somewhat different social competencies. Accordingly, we believe that different social skills are learned in different relationships. For example, parent–child relationships are structurally asymmetrical, whereas peer relationships are egalitarian (Hartup, 1979); Youniss, 1980). As a result, certain skills, such as reciprocal exchange skills or mutual self-disclosure skills, are likely to be acquired first in the context of peer relationships. One would not expect a simple one-to-one correspondence between social skills and relationships, because several relationships may provide the contexts for learning the skills needed for a particular kind of interaction. Still, certain relationships are likely to be primary contributors to the development of particular social competencies.

According to a neo-Sullivanian theory, there should be a relatively orderly sequence in which children master the full spectrum of social competencies. This sequence is dictated in part by the order in which children try to master different types of interactions, which in turn is influenced by the sequence of ascending social needs. As children become motivated to undertake new types of social activities, they must practice and master the competencies demanded by those new types of interactions. This developmental sequence is also influenced by the hierarchical nature of social competence; the growth of some advanced skills are dependent on the mastery and intercoordination of lesser skills. Thus, although there probably is not a strict universal sequence of developmental stages, we should be able to specify a normative timetable of when different social competencies are usually first learned and the types of relationships that are typically most instrumental to their growth.

Although Sullivan did not go so far as to advocate that there are "critical periods" in development, he did believe that failure to acquire the requisite skills of a stage can have lasting negative consequences. If children fail to establish the key relationships of a period, then they are deprived of the opportunity to master the new skills required by those relationships. Because many advanced skills depend on the hierarchical accumulation of basic competencies, the failure to establish key relationships leaves children at a distinct disadvantage for gaining the skills of the subsequent stages.

In addition to providing the context for learning particular skills, key relationships can also play a role in *developmental arrests* (see Table 3.1). In almost every case, an arrest involves the child adopting a maladaptive coping pattern in order to deal with an anxiety-provoking interpersonal situation. For example, during the childhood period, a maladjusted parent–child relationship can set the stage for a "malevolent transformation," in which the child comes to believe that he or she really lives among enemies. With an arrest, development does not actually stop; instead, the course of development is diverted to a less-than-optimal path.

Failure to form the key relationships of a period can also have emotional

consequences. The clearest example of this is Sullivan's account of preadolescent loneliness, which he believed comes about when the need for intimacy is not satisfied because of a failure to establish a close friendship. More generally, Sullivan's description of development suggests that there are a number of links between social life and emotional experience. Within each stage, the emergence of a need is accompanied by the intensification of particular *focal emotions* (see Table 3-1). These include a set of positive and negative affects, which motivate the child to acquire the social competencies necessary to establish new forms of interaction (Weiss, 1974). For example, during the juvenile era feelings of rejection and social self-worth intensify as children come to desire acceptance by the peer society.

Developmental Stages

The *infancy stage* begins at birth and continues until the appearance of articulate speech. In this first stage, the infant is totally dependent on adult caregivers to satisfy bodily needs, and out of the association between the tender ministering of the mother and the fullfillment of basic bodily needs evolves "the *need for tenderness*—for the protective care delicately adjusted to the immediate situation" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 290). This continues throughout life as the need for nurturance and support in times of helplessness and distress. Sullivan argued that anxiety in mothers can be an extremely disruptive influence on parent–infant interactions. At its extreme, maternal anxiety may cause infants to develop primitive expectancies that interpersonal tenderness leads to feelings of anxiety and insecurity. In a related vein, Ainsworth (1979) argued that maternal insensitivity, which perhaps could occur because of anxiety, may lead to the developmental arrest of "insecure attachment."

In Sullivan's theory, the *childhood stage* begins around age 2 and extends to the time children begin preschool or kindergarten. Here the "*need for adult participation* is added—that is, a need for the interest and participation of a significant adult in the child's play" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 290). This need continues throughout life as a desire for shared companionship in activities of mutual interest and enjoyment. During childhood parents are key playmate companions, taking on the responsibility for structuring playful activities appropriate to the child's developmental level. Although children of this age also play with peers and siblings, Sullivan believed that toddlers strongly prefer interactions with parents. If the parents are negligent of their roles as playful companions, their children may fall into a "cycle of isolation." In this form of developmental arrest, children develop a reclusive pattern of self-play that is accompanied by feelings of isolation and boredom.

It is through the parent–child relationship that children first learn about asymmetrical exchange in relationships. Compliance with powerful others can bring tangible rewards and the fulfillment of social needs. Children learn that needs are no longer unconditionally satisfied as they were in infancy and that need fulfillment is awarded contingent upon appropriate behavior. This is the stage in which fear is first brought to bear as a socialization influence, with punishment and love withdrawal being used by parents to bring about compliance with demands. Within the context of parent–child relationships, children learn to delay gratification and comply with demands in order to optimize rewards and cost. Docile compliance is not the optimal strategy, however, for it is also essential to learn effective self-assertion.

Not all children, however, come away from childhood with a positive attitude about the exchange potential of social relationships. Some develop what Sullivan described as the "malevolent transformation." This form of developmental arrest occurs when overtures for tenderness and companionship are met with a mixture of indifference and rebuff from parents. Children then come to believe that other people are enemies and that it is best to protect oneself by striking out at others before others have a chance to hurt you.

The *juvenile era* begins with the entrance to schooling, and it is then that companionship with other children becomes increasingly desired. Being able to engage in harmonious play relationships with peers demands that children master yet another form of social relationship—the egalitarian exchange relationship. In this type of relationship, both children have relatively equal power status with neither particularly interested in or capable of looking out for the needs of the other (Selman, 1980). Although there is an inherent self-centeredness in children's approaches to these relationships, they must nevertheless master the skills of cooperation, compromise, and competition in order to be integrated successfully into peer play groups (Piaget, 1965; Youniss, 1980). Sullivan pointed out that it is not always easy to learn the optimal balance between prosocial and competition behaviors; whereas winning is a valued goal of play, doing so unfairly or at the expense of playmates can undermine the cooperative basis of the relationship and reduce one's attractiveness as a play partner.

As juveniles move outside their homes into the world of peers, they become increasingly aware of the differences among children in appearance, competence, family background, and social skill (Ruble, Parsons & Ross, 1976). These differences serve as yardsticks by which the desirability of children as playmates are measured. Social status hierarchies begin to emerge as consensus grows concerning what makes children preferred companions. Sullivan portrayed the peer society as often cruel and insensitive, with children openly comparing their similarities and differences and in-group and out-group lines drawn to exclude those who are different or considered inferior.

In conjunction with this peer-evaluation process, children acquire the *need for acceptance* by peers, along with its complement, the fear of ostracism and exclusion. Juveniles learn that the acceptance and esteem of peers is

contingent upon how one looks, acts, and performs relative to agemates. Moreover, the juvenile era is a time when one's feelings of self-worth are increasingly influenced by status in the peer society. Sullivan believed that ostracism by peers is one form of developmental arrest that may leave a lasting mark on children's sense of self-esteem and deprives them of experiences that are necessary for learning how to interact appropriately with peers.

Another type of developmental arrest can grow out of the juvenile concern with social comparison and self-worth. Here, some children come to use disparagement of others as a means of evaluating their own standing. Sullivan (1953) viewed this as a maladaptive security operation because it has the effect of undermining the foundation of one's own sense of self-esteem:

> Since you have to protect your feeling of personal worth by noting how unworthy everybody around you is, you are not provided with any data that are convincing evidence of your having personal worth; so it gradually evolves into "I am not as bad as the other swine." To be the best swine, when it would be nice to be a person, is not a particularly good way of furthering anything except security operations. When security is achieved that way, it strikes at the very roots of that which is essentially human—the utterly vital role of interpersonal relations. (p. 242)

For Sullivan (1953), *preadolescence* is an important turning point in development, when the "*need for intimate exchange*, for friendship, or for—in its high refinement—the love for another person, with its enormous facilitation of consensual validation" (p. 291) emerges. Two strong motivating forces behind the need for intimacy are the experience of love and the avoidance of loneliness. The key target of this need is a same-sex friend or "chum" who is similar to oneself in age, background, and interests. These friendship bonds are characterized by an intense closeness based on extensive self-disclosure. Although juveniles and even younger children do have preferred playmates or friends, Sullivan felt these relationships fall short of full-blown friendships.

These preadolescent friendships represent a significant advance in children's mastery of forms of personal relationships. They are not only the prototype of adult friendships, but they are also a key foundation upon which romantic, marital, and parenting relationships are built (Berndt, 1982; Piaget, 1965; Youniss, 1980). Sullivan (1953) thought of "chumships" as the first relationships that could be characterized as *collaborations*, which involve "clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in the pursuit of increasingly identical—that is, more and more mutual—satisfactions" (p. 246). In contrast to the self-centered exchange orientation of the juvenile period, collaborations are relationship-centered exchanges in which children believe that by improving the welfare of their chums, they can raise their relationships to a higher level of closeness and affection, which is to the benefit of each participant. Whereas an attitude of "what should I do to get what I want?" seems to characterize juvenile relationships, a collaborative orientation is one of "what should I do to contribute to the happiness or to support the prestige and feeling of worthfulness of my chum?" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 245). Common experience tells us, however, that not all preadolescent friendships are true collaborations and that even for those that are, there are times when friends lapse into bouts of self-centeredness.

Establishing collaborative relationships fosters the growth of certain social competencies. Although Sullivan did not clearly spell out these competencies, we can speculate as to what they are. First, children must put aside inhibiting feelings of insecurity in order to disclose private feelings and secrets. Similarly, they must achieve a sense of loyalty in order to create an accepting and trusting atmosphere in which their chums feel free to make themselves vulnerable. At times, children must be empathic and compassionate supporters in order to aid their chums in times of distress. At other times, children may be called upon to sacrifice personal needs altruistically for the sake of their friends. To do this, children must be able to take their chums' perspective and fully grasp their needs and then anticipate the effects that one's own actions will have on others (Selman, 1980). Other types of close relationships, such as those with parents and siblings, may also provide interactions that promote the development of these same skills, but Sullivan believed that chumships are of particular importance.

According to Sullivan, an outstanding benefit of an intimate chumship is *consensual validation*. By self-disclosing, chums often learn that they are not peculiar or different and that others have private lives similar to their own. Through consensual agreement, they can also conclude that their shared interests, preferences, hopes, and fears are valid and worthy. This provides reassurance that one's outlook is truly "right." Having chums also make children feel important simply because they are important to others. This experience can be a great boost to one's sense of personal worth. Unlike juvenile relationships where social value is predominantly determined by skill at games and popularity in the group, preadolescents can feel worthy and important because they are intensely wanted and needed by their chums. The crucial factor in achieving the friend's esteem is being a good relationship partner—having a loving and caring orientation that leads the chum to love and care about you. Although preadolescents continue to desire group acceptance, the esteem of a close friend can compensate somewhat for lack of public status.

In fact, Sullivan thought that one extremely valuable function of intimate friendships is the natural "psychotherapeutic possibilities" that they can afford; that is, the supportive atmosphere of a collaborative friendship can partially or wholly remedy certain developmental arrests resulting from earlier misfortunes in relationships with parents and peers. Sullivan (1953) outlined specifically how an intimate friendship can ameliorate several of the major developmental arrests:

1. The *malevolent child*: The "drive connected with the need for intimate association with someone else is so powerful that quite frequently chumships are formed even by malevolent people," which can "provide experience which definitely opens the mind anew to the possibility that one can be treated tenderly, whereupon the malevolent transformation is sometimes reversed, literally cured" (p. 253).
2. The *isolated child*: Children who are caught in the cycle of isolation started by the failure of parents to serve as play companions may "come out remarkably well able to handle themselves, to develop the docile accommodation which did not really reach them in the juvenile period; and this is because of the peculiarly intimate consensual exchange which goes on in [preadolescent chumships]" (p. 254).
3. The *disparaging child*: "These folks, getting into the preadolescent socialization, quite often gain enough in security from intimacy with their chums to enable them to really open their minds and discuss the other unpleasant people who don't seem to like them, in a fashion that is illuminating, both as to the real worth of the others and as to some of their own traits which may not be very endearing" (p. 253).
4. The *ostracized child*: "It is quite possible that in preadolescence that two unfortunate juveniles thrown together by their unfortunate social status as juveniles may, under the influence of the growing need for intimacy, actually do each other a great deal of good. And as they show some improvement they will become less objectionable to the prevailing preadolescent society and may actually get to be quite well esteemed in the gang" (p. 252).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance Sullivan gave to the therapeutic potential of chumships. In fact, his innovative treatment for schizophrenia involved a form of milieu therapy in which the aim was to recreate preadolescent chumships.

Not only do preadolescent chumships have great therapeutic value, but the failure to establish this type of relationship can cause feelings of loneliness. Normally, the experience of loneliness acts as a strong motivating force that drives isolated children to overcome their insecurities and establish close relationships, but if this does not happen, children suffer frequent feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Beyond the experience of loneliness, Sullivan did not explicitly discuss the lasting consequences of the failure to form an intimate friendship. It is consistent with his thinking, however, to argue that chumships are necessary for learning how to establish collaborations. Those who fail to form a collaborative chumship may subsequently be arrested at an immature juvenile form of relating to others in which relationships are approached rather selfishly. Moreover, this failure may restrict the avenues for gaining a sense of personal worth to those of gaining extrinsic approval, public status, and disparagement of others.

Early *adolescence* begins with the "eruption of true genital interest, felt as *lust* [and extends] to the patterning of sexual behavior which is the beginning of the last phase of adolescence" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 263). Accompanying the rise of lust is an extension of the need for intimacy to include peers of the opposite sex. Thus, the key relationships of early adolescence are ones with opposite sex peers, who have suddenly become the object of two powerful needs—intimacy and sexuality.

Sullivan observed that it is usually difficult for young adolescents to establish cross-sex relationships that can fulfill the demands of these needs. He describes several "collisions" among the lust dynamism, the need for intimacy and feelings of personal security that can interfere with forming collaborative heterosexual relationships. Overpowering feelings of lust often push young adolescents into actual or fantasized sexual encounters that are accompanied by strong feelings of anxiety, shame, and guilt. These feelings make it difficult to form relationships based on openness, sensitivity, and mutual caring. Parents and society at large can add to the problem by attempting to prohibit sexual experimentation and by ridiculing or making light of early love relationships.

Sullivan also briefly described an additional stage of late adolescence, which begins when a characteristic pattern of fulfilling intimacy and sexual needs is established. This stage is not depicted in Figure 3.1 or Table 3.1 because Sullivan did not describe the key features of this stage. That is, he did not specify the new social needs that emerge nor indicate the relationships that are of key importance.

Empirical Evidence

Sullivan's theory serves as a provocative perspective for considering the changing functions of relationships, in particular friendship. Although few investigators have explicitly used a Sullivanian framework, there are bodies of empirical literature that bear on the themes that we have developed (Berndt, 1982). In this section we critically review selected portions of this literature concerning friendship, pointing out where the Sullivanian theory has received support and where additional empirical and theoretical work is needed.

Friends as Need Fulfillers

Sullivan believed that the role of friends in need fulfillment changes over the course of development. Of particular relevance to the present chapter are the needs for companionship and intimacy. The emergence of these two needs captures the major shift from dependence on family to reliance on peers that occurs between 6 and 15 years of age. During the juvenile stage

"compeers" become desired providers of companionship. During pre-adolescence the need for intimacy intensifies, fostering the formation of close collaborative friendships.

If needs are thought of as preferences for particular types of interactions, then we should observe developmental changes in the degree to which peers and friends are preferred as sources of companionship and intimacy. Unfortunately, few researchers have directly investigated with whom children prefer to engage in different types of interactions. If we assume, however, that children act in accordance with their preferences, then we should be able to infer who they prefer as interaction partners on the basis of the frequency with which they interact with different network members. If children turn to peers more often than to parents for companionship, it is likely that peers are the more desired source of companionship. Our estimate of children's preference hierarchy based on interaction frequencies is only approximate, however, because children do not have full control over how they spend their time. For example, it is not uncommon for children to want to spend more time playing with friends than parents will allow. Nevertheless, in the absence of more direct measures of preference hierarchies, interaction frequencies provide a reasonable estimate.

Several lines of evidence converge to support Sullivan's hypotheses about the role of peers in fulfilling the desire for companionship. Wright (1967) recorded the amount of time children ranging in age from 1.5 to 11 years spent with different people in the course of a typical day. Consistent with Sullivan's model, adults were the most frequent companions until about age 6, at which point time spent with other children rose to rival companionship with adults. Companionship with adults, however, showed only a gradual decline with age, and it was not until age 11 that companionship with peers was more frequent than companionship with parents.

The results of one of our own studies are consistent with this observational study but broaden the picture to include older children (Buhrmester & Furman, 1984). Children in the second, fifth, and eighth grades were given a multi-item questionnaire asking them to indicate how much time they spend with eight people (mother, father, closest grandparent, closest sibling, teacher, same-sex friend, opposite-sex friend, and boy or girl friend). Figure 3-2 presents the mean ratings for mother, father, same-sex friends, and opposite-sex friends. In the juvenile era (second grade), same-sex peers are perceived as providing as much companionship as parents. By eighth grade same-sex peers are the most frequent source of companionship.

As Sullivan predicted, second and fifth graders also reported spending little time with opposite-sex peers. This finding is consistent with numerous sociometric studies showing that preschool- and elementary-school-aged children rarely nominate opposite-sex peers as desired play companions (Asher, Oden, & Gottman, 1977). This taboo on cross-sex relationships may play an important role in the socialization of masculine and feminine social
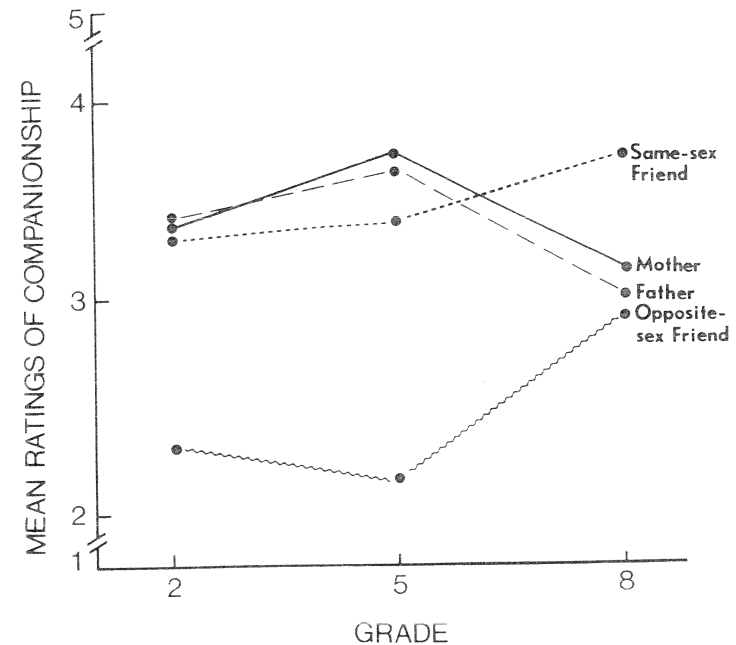

Figure 3-2. Mean ratings of companionship with mothers, fathers, same-sex friends, and opposite-sex friends for second-, fifth-, and eighth-grade children.

styles. As a result of keeping to themselves, members of each sex may find reinforcement for newly emerging and fragile sex-role norms and attitudes. By early adolescence (eighth grade), the picture has changed substantially; between fifth and eighth grades there is a significant increase in reported companionship with opposite-sex friends, whereas parents' roles as companions begin to decline. Thus, Sullivan's key hypotheses concerning who children rely on for companionship are supported.

Sullivan argued that the need for intimacy first emerges during pre-adolescence and that same-sex friends are the key providers. This view is generally supported by research on children's conceptions of friendship. Between preadolescence and adolescence children's descriptions of friendships show a dramatic increase in the number of comments about sharing intimate thoughts and feelings (Berndt, 1981; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980; Furman & Bierman, 1984). Children's ratings of the level of intimacy in ongoing friendships also increase between childhood and adolescence (Diaz & Berndt, 1982; Hunter & Youniss, 1982; Rivenbark, 1971; Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hoffman, 1981). The exact point at which this increase takes place, however, is less certain. Although Sullivan argued that the need for intimacy with friends intensified in preadolescence (around 8 to 11 years of

age), most investigators have not found significantly higher intimacy levels until adolescence (12 to 15 years of age).

These findings are complicated by sex differences, a topic Sullivan did not discuss. (In fact, Sullivan, 1953, stated that his theory best describes the social development of boys and that it may or may not be an accurate description of female development.) Investigators have consistently found that girls report greater intimacy in friendship than do boys (Foot, Chapman, & Smith, 1980; Rivenbark, 1971). This occurs in both children's descriptions of what friendships should be like (Berndt, 1981; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980) and in their descriptions of their own friendships (Childs & Furman, 1984; Sharabany et al., 1981).

As part of the study described previously (Buhrmester & Furman, 1984) we attempted to determine at what age sex differences in self-reported intimacy in friendships first emerge. Children in the second, fifth, and eighth grades rated how much they talk to, share their private thoughts and feelings with, and tell secrets to their best friend. Figure 3.3 presents the mean ratings of friends for boys and girls separately. In the second grade, boys and girls did not significantly differ in their ratings of same-sex friendships. By the fifth grade, however, girls rated their friendships as being significantly more intimate than boys did, and this difference was even greater in the eighth grade. Thus, in keeping with Sullivan's general claim, it appears that preadolescence may be the stage in which friends become key providers of intimacy for girls, but boys' development may lag somewhat behind.

Figure 3-3 also indicates that Sullivan may have underestimated the importance of parents as sources of intimacy, particularly for younger children. As can be seen in Figure 3-3, parents are perceived as the key providers of intimacy for second graders and continue to be significant, though secondary, sources through early adolescence. Thus, although friendship serves an important function in the fulfillment of the need for intimacy, it certainly is not the only relationship that serves this function. Sullivan's failure to consider the role of parents as intimacy providers is indicative of a general tendency by him not to discuss the relative contributions made by the full range of network members.

Sullivan thought that cross-sex peer relationships do not play a role in satisfying the need for intimacy until early adolescence. This view is supported by the results in Figure 3-3 and by data from other studies. (Rivenbark, 1971; Sharabany et al., 1981). Whereas most young adolescents report having opposite-sex chums with whom they disclose a great deal, these cross-sex friendships still remain less intense than same-sex ones. Perceived levels of intimacy are even higher in relationships with boyfriends and girlfriends, but these too do not exceed ratings of same-sex friends. This situation changes in late adolescence. Numerous investigators have found that cross-sex intimacy—both in and out of the context of romantic relationships—becomes increasingly important as adolescents approach
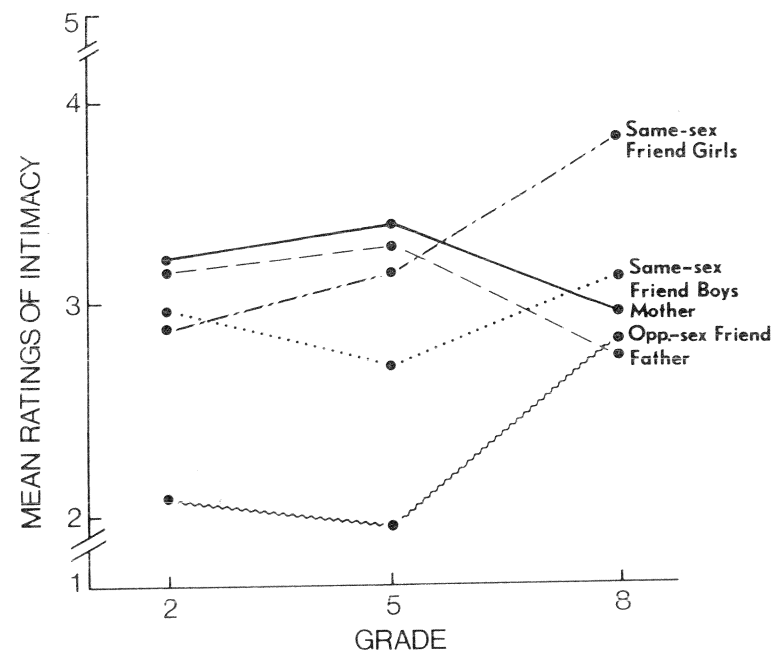
Figure 3-3. Mean ratings of intimacy with mothers, fathers, opposite-sex friends, and same-sex friends for second-, fifth-, and eighth-grade children. Means for boys and girls are presented separately for ratings of same-sex friends.

young adulthood (Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985; Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). Thus, whereas Sullivan may have overestimated the importance of friends as providers of intimacy in preadolescence, it is clear that same-sex and opposite-sex friends have become key sources of social provisions by early adolescence.

Friendship and the Growth of Social Competence

Following Sullivan's lead, we have sketched out a model of the development of social competence. In our view, social competence grows as children undertake new types of interactions in the context of different relationships. Childhood peer relations and friendships provide some particularly important opportunities for fostering the growth of social competence. In this section we briefly overview selected findings concerning their contribution to the growth of social competence.

It is important to distinguish between the influence of peer-group relations and the influence of friendship (Furman & Robbins, in press). Sullivan suggested that during the juvenile period the egalitarian exchange basis of peer-group relationships provides an important context for

becoming competent at cooperation, compromise, and competition. Children who master these modes of interaction are likely to be accepted and popular in the peer group. Preadolescent friendships, on the other hand, represent a collaborative structure that fosters high level perspective-taking skills, modes of empathic support, and altruistic concern for friends' needs. These latter competencies contribute directly to the quality of close dyadic relationships and are required less frequently in interactions involving groups of peers than in dyadic interactions.

Although the Sullivanian hypothesis suggests that particular relationships are more critical than others to the mastery of certain skills, it does not imply that these skills are exclusively learned in one type of relationship. Skills in perspective-taking, empathic support, and altruistic concern are also called upon in peer-group interactions; however, these close relationship skills are probably of greater importance in friendships than in group interactions. Similarly, the skills of cooperation, competition, and compromise are used in friendships, but these skills are of crucial importance in determining successful group interactions. Thus, popularity should be more highly correlated with one set of skills, whereas the quality of friendships should be more highly correlated with another set, even though both should be correlated.

Investigators studying the correlates of sociometric status have found general support for the hypothesis that children must be able to cooperate, compromise, and compete appropriately in order to gain peer-group acceptance. Compared to unpopular children, popular children engage more frequently in cooperative or prosocial behaviors, such as (a) adjusting to and cooperating with group rules (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982; Lippitt, 1941; Van Hasselt, Bellack, & Hersen, 1979), (b) giving and receiving more reinforcement (Gottman, Gonzo, Rasmussen, 1975; Hartup, Glazer, Charlesworth, 1967; Masters & Furman, 1981), and (c) expressing kindness (Smith, 1950). In contrast, unpopular or rejected children are likely to engage in more agonistic and punitive interactions than are popular children (Gottman et. al, 1975; Hartup et al., 1967; Furman & Masters, 1980) and are more disruptive in groups (Coie et al., 1982). The skills of compromise and appropriate competitiveness have not been studied directly; however, popular children have been found to be more conforming (Masters & Furman, 1981; Moore, 1967) and better at sports (Klaus, 1959) than are unpopular children, suggesting that they may be more adept in these skills as well.

Few investigators have examined the hypothesis that perspective-taking skills, empathy, and altruism are associated with the quality of preadolescent friendships. Although the evidence is not completely consistent, some investigators have found that peer-group popularity is positively correlated with perspective-taking ability (Gottman et al., 1975; Kurdek & Krile, 1982; Rubin, 1972), expressing kindness to peers (Smith, 1950), and using conventional rather than unconventional modes of help-giving (Ladd

& Oden, 1979). Popularity, however, is a measure of the *number* of friends and not necessarily a measure of the *quality* of dyadic friendships.

In a few cases investigators have examined the influence of close friendship independent of popularity status. Mannarino (1976, 1979) identified two groups of preadolescents, one group who had stable friendships and another who had no close friends. These groups were matched on popularity status. Children with close friends scored higher on self-report and laboratory assessments of altruism than those without close friends. In a similarly designed study, McGuire and Weisz (1982) found that children with close friends displayed higher levels of altruism and affective perspective-taking than did those without close friends. By contrast, sociometric popularity was not related to these competencies.

Other than these few exceptions, the critical tests of Sullivan's hypothesis about the relative contributions of peer groups and close friendships have not been conducted. One problem has been the lack of methods to assess children's friendships. As previously mentioned, the number of friends children have is not a good indicator of the quality of those friendships. There is a strong need for measures that assess the qualitative features of friendships, such as the extent of companionship, level of intimacy, sense of loyalty, and the frequency of conflict. Such measures have recently been developed (Furman, Adler, & Buhrmester, 1984; LaGaipa, 1981; Mannarino, 1976), but have not yet been extensively used.

The Therapeutic Benefits of Friendship

Sullivan argued that preadolescent friendships could help remediate several types of social adjustment problems. We have been unable to find any research designed specifically to test his claims, but there are several studies that shed some light on the possible role of friends in overcoming adjustment problems.

Children who have at least one close friend may be better adjusted than those who have no close friends. Mannarino (1978) reported that among children matched for popularity status, those who had close friendships reported higher levels of self-esteem as compared to those who had no close friends. Sundby and Kreyberg (1968) found that emotionally disturbed children who had a best friend had a much better prognosis than did those without one. The difference in prognosis was even apparent 10 to 15 years after the initial assessment. Because these are correlational studies, it is unclear whether children with friends are better adjusted because they have friends or whether they have friends because they are better adjusted.

Other tests of Sullivan's claims concerning the therapeutic benefits of friendships are intervention studies in which peers are involved as part of the treatment program. Although a number of investigators have developed social skills training programs that improve children's peer interactions and sociometric status (see Furman, 1984; Hops, 1982), only a few researchers

have incorporated interactions with peers as part of their treatment procedures (Furman, Rahe, & Hartup, 1979). In one program for unaccepted preadolescents, Bierman and Furman (1984) compared the effectiveness of three treatment conditions: (a) social skills training, (b) interactions with peers that were structured to be positive in nature, and (c) a combination of skills training and positive peer-group interaction. Whereas skill training promoted the acquisition and use of social skills, the peer involvement increased peer acceptance and children's self-perceptions of social competence. The combined treatment condition appeared to be the most effective; changes were found in both social skills and peer acceptance. The structured interactions enabled the children to apply their newly learned skills in interactions that fostered the development of positive relationships and helped change the peers' opinion toward target children (Bierman, 1984).

In light of these findings and Sullivan's theoretical arguments concerning the therapeutic value of chumships, we believe that it may be worth developing friendship-enhancement programs. Unlike other programs that have been designed to improve children's relationships with peers in general, the aim of a friendship-therapy program would be to enhance the quality of children's friendships by fostering the competencies demanded by close relationships. Such a program should include several elements. First, it should teach children social skills that are important to friendship. In addition to the conversational and other prosocial skills included in traditional programs, it might also include training components designed to promote intimate self-disclosure, recognition of friends' needs, and emotional support. Second, children should be given the opportunity to exercise and master these new competencies in the context of an ongoing friendship. Children who do not have a friend should be paired with a receptive peer. Various interaction exercises could be developed to provide opportunities to apply the newly learned skills to their ongoing relationship. Finally, a trained counselor should monitor the progress of their relationship over an extended period of time to help prevent the reappearance of maladaptive interaction patterns.

A basic tenet of our theoretical model is that close relationship skills are mastered within the context of a collaborative relationship, such as a friendship, in which each partner is trying to advance the relationship to a more mutually satisfying level. By first encouraging children to learn and apply close relationship skills to an ongoing friendship, and then nurturing the growth of that friendship, this treatment program should promote the growth of skills and at the same time foster the development of at least one friendship. The program may even have a beneficial impact on other relationships, including those with siblings, parents, and the larger peer group.

Summary and Conclusions

Overall, the empirical findings provide encouraging support for a neo-Sullivanian model. The evidence concerning developmental changes in the nature of friendships seems particularly strong, and the evidence concerning the links between interpersonal competencies and relationships is promising. At the same time, many of Sullivan's hypotheses have not been adequately tested. For example, we know remarkably little about the therapeutic benefits of friendships.

It is also evident that some revisions in the theory will be necessary. For example, Sullivan gave little consideration to sex differences in interpersonal relationships, and it seems likely that the course of social development for boys and girls will differ in some respects. As noted previously, Sullivan principally focused on the key relationships during different developmental epochs. We need to consider also the "secondary" roles played by other network members. For example, even though friends appear to be the key relationship during the transition from childhood to adolescence, parents continue to have important roles. Sullivan neglected other potentially important relationships as well, such as those with siblings, relatives, and teachers.

Further, Sullivan did not adequately address late adolescent and adult development. Clearly, the functions of friendship are likely to change as young people select mates, establish lasting marital bonds, and become parents. Although Sullivan devoted little attention to later development, it is likely that different social needs become salient (e.g., the need to nurture one's own children) and that new social competencies must be mastered.

As noted earlier, the concept of social needs also should be carefully scrutinized. Since the time that Sullivan developed his theory, many concerns have been raised about the value of such a construct. At the same time, we believe that some motivational component is required to understand social development.

We also should be certain that friendships are not overidealized. For many years these relationships were neglected by developmental psychologists. Now, however, they are receiving much attention, but the focus has almost exclusively been on the positive benefits of such relationships. We need to recognize that friendships can be sources of strain and have negative impacts on children as well. Children may become overly concerned about their friends' approval, or they may be competitive with friends (Fincham, 1978).

Despite these limitations, we believe that a neo-Sullivanian model has considerable promise. We have tried to systematize Sullivan's model of social development and apply it to contemporary work. The model is a developmental one that attempts to outline the stages that children pass

through as they grow into mature social beings. The description hinges on the intuitively appealing idea that children are actively motivated to establish new types of social relations as they get older. New relationships not only have the function of fulfilling social needs, but they contribute to the growth of social competencies and the remediation of adjustment problems. By specifying several functions of social relations, the model allows us to compare and contrast the signficance of different types of relationships at various points in development. Thus, we hope that investigators will draw on Sullivan's insights in building a comprehensive understanding of the role of friendships in social development and adjustment.

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Chapter 4

Personality and Friendship: The Friendship Worlds of Self-Monitoring

Mark Snyder and Dave Smith

"A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature."—Emerson

When one considers the amount of time people spend with their friends, the range and diversity of their shared activities, the roles that friends play, and the functions that they serve, there can be no denying the significance of friendship in peoples' lives. It is perhaps because of the pervasive influence and the diverse impact of friends that ambiguities and contradictions have arisen from attempts to define friendship. Thus, from the earliest speculations of the ancient philosophers to the research programs of modern scientists, people have been trying to gain an understanding of the nature of friendship.

The origins of the classical notions of friendship can be found, for the most part, in ancient Greek philosophy. Beginning with the works of Plato and Aristotle, and appearing as a recurring theme in later works, is the notion that qualitatively different kinds of friendship may exist. What qualifies one person as a "friend" may be radically different from what qualifies another person as a friend, and what constitutes a friendship for one person may be entirely different from what constitutes a friendship for another person.

Consider first the views of Plato on friendship. In the Platonic system, the notion of differing types of friendship emerged as a distinction between those friendships that qualified as "true" friendships and those that were merely "illusions" and "deceptions." In that system, "true" friendships were thought to be the result of basic human drives that were manifested in "philosophic ecstasy" and "contemplation of the Good"; all other friendships were considered illusions and deceptions (Plato, *Lysis, Phaedrus*).

For Aristotle, a somewhat more elaborated typology of friendship was necessary to encompass both the role of the friend's personality and the functions served by the friend. As a parallel to the ideal friend envisioned by Plato, Aristotle developed the concept of the "primary friendship." Although closely related to Plato's "ideal," Aristotle's "primary" friendship represented