

# The Development of Companionship and Intimacy

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BUHRMESTER, DUANE, and FURMAN, WYNDOL. *The Development of Companionship and Intimacy*. CHILD DEVELOPMENT, 1987, 58, 1101-1113. This study is concerned with the development of companionship and intimacy. Subjects in the second, fifth, and eighth grades (mean ages, respectively, 7.5, 10.4, and 13.4) rated the importance and extent of companionship and intimate disclosure experienced in social life in general and in each of 8 types of relationships. Companionship was perceived as a desired social provision at all 3 grade levels. Family members were important providers of companionship for children in the second and fifth grades, but they became significantly less so in the eighth grade. Same-sex peers were important providers across all 3 grades, and they became increasingly important as children grew older. Opposite-sex peers did not become important as companions until the eighth grade. Counter to expectations, there were no age differences in the global desire for intimacy. Parents were important providers of intimate disclosure for the youngest children, but they were less important among the younger adolescents. There was mixed support for the hypothesis that same-sex friends become important providers of intimacy during preadolescence. Findings were different for boys and girls, suggesting that girls seek intimate disclosure in friendship at younger ages than boys do.

This study is concerned with the development of companionship and intimacy during preadolescence and adolescence. Two major questions were addressed. First, are there developmental changes in the extent to which children desire companionship and intimacy in social relations? Second, are there developmental changes in the people on whom children rely to provide these desired forms of interaction?

Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) was one of the few theorists to attempt to provide a systematic account of the development of companionship and intimacy. He proposed a model of social development in which particular social needs were seen as emerging during certain stages of development. He believed that the need for companionship first emerges in toddlerhood in the form of a de-

sire for coparticipation in play, whereas the need for intimacy emerges much later—during preadolescence. Sullivan also thought that changes occurred in the relationship partners that children rely on to fulfill these needs. Parents are initially sought to provide companionship during toddlerhood, whereas “compeers” (same-age peers) become the preferred source of companionship once children enter school. According to Sullivan, peer companions are almost exclusively limited to same-sex children until early adolescence, at which time there is a general awakening of interest in cross-sex relationships. Sullivan believed that the need for intimacy first emerges in the context of preadolescent friendships or chumships. He believed that the intimacy experienced in chumships provides preadolescents consensual validation of personal worth and creates the atmosphere in

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which mature sensitivity and caring about another person's welfare is learned. During adolescence, this mature form of intimacy becomes increasingly sought in heterosexual relationships (see Buhrmester & Furman, 1986, and Youniss, 1980, for more complete discussions of the developmental aspects of Sullivan's theory).

Sullivan's account of developing social needs provides a useful organizational framework for investigating the common observation that children of different ages seek different things in their social lives. By examining the extent to which different relationships provide companionship and intimacy, one can assess the relative importance of different relationships to the individual. Such an account would also enable us to map increases and decreases in the functional (subjective) importance of different relationships over the course of development. Although Sullivan focused on the roles of parents and peers, a more complete account would include the contributions made by other network members, such as siblings, grandparents, and teachers. A comprehensive account of the development of companionship and intimacy would also contribute to our understanding of other domains of development. For example, the development of social skills may be directly related to children's attempts to achieve new forms of relations with network members.

*Companionship*—Little is known about when the global desire for companionship first appears, but investigators have tried to identify the individuals on whom children rely for companionship. For example, adults are frequent companions during early childhood and the elementary school years, but they become less important companions as children enter adolescence (Barker & Wright, 1955, Ellis, Rogoff, & Cromer, 1981). Instead, children turn to same-sex peers as they get older.

The presence of a "taboo" on cross-sex interactions has been clearly demonstrated for young children and preadolescents in studies of time allocation (Ellis et al., 1981, La Freniere, Strayer, & Gauthier, 1984, Wright, 1967) and sociometric nominations (Hartup, 1983, Marshall & McCandless, 1957). There is some uncertainty, however, about changes in cross-sex companionship in early adolescence. Investigators using sociometric approaches have shown that same-sex peers continue to be almost exclusively nominated as the most preferred companions, although opposite-sex peers are named a little more

frequently in early adolescence (Schofield, 1981, Taylor & Singleton, 1983). Using time-allocation approaches, however, investigators have found that a significant proportion of adolescent's interactions are with opposite-sex peers (Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, & Prescott, 1977). Further data are needed to determine at what age the cross-sex taboo is lifted and when opposite-sex peers become desired providers of companionship.

Much less research has been done on the roles of other network members as providers of companionship. Several recent studies suggest that siblings are important companions for young children (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982, Ellis et al., 1981) and preadolescents (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985a). Very little is known, however, about developmental changes in companionship with siblings, although it is sometimes assumed to decrease with age. Teachers and extended family members, such as grandparents, are also likely to be sources of companionship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985b), but virtually no data on developmental changes in these relationships exist.

*Intimacy*—Sullivan believed that the general need for intimacy emerges as a powerful interpersonal motive during preadolescence (ages 9–12). We have found no studies that address this hypothesis. Several investigators, however, have attempted to evaluate the idea that, during this period, there are increases in the extent to which same-sex friends provide intimacy. Unfortunately, the findings are mixed. Most investigators have found that children's descriptions of their friendships do not show an increased number of comments about the sharing of intimate thoughts and feelings until ages 13–16 (Berndt, 1981, Bigelow & LaGarpa, 1980), although some have found earlier increases (Furman & Bierman, 1983, Youniss, 1980). Self-report ratings of intimacy in friendship show only gradual increases during adolescence (Hunter & Youniss, 1982, Rivenbark, 1971, Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hoffman, 1981). No investigators, however, have studied children younger than 11 years of age using self-report ratings of intimacy. The inclusion of such children is essential for testing the hypothesis that preadolescents (i.e., 9–12-year-olds) have more intimate friendships than younger children.

Although Sullivan did not address the issue of sex differences in social development, it has been argued that girls experience intimacy in same-sex friendships at an earlier age than boys (Douvan & Adelson, 1966, Foot, Chapman, & Smith, 1977). Investigators have

found that girls report greater intimacy in friendship than boys do when either open-ended descriptions of friendship (Berndt, 1981, Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980) or self-report measures of disclosure (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985b, Rivenbark, 1971, Sharabany et al., 1981) have been used. Although this sex difference is well established, it remains an open question as to when these differences first emerge. Furthermore, it is not clear that this sex difference is confined to same-sex friendships, it may be part of a general tendency for girls to experience greater intimacy in relationships than boys do.

Family members are also likely to be important providers of intimacy, especially for young children (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985b, Kon & Losenkov, 1978, Rivenbark, 1971). Hunter and Youniss (1982) found that fourth-grade children reported greater intimacy with their mothers than with their friends, and that it was not until the tenth grade that friends were rated significantly higher than parents. This led us to expect that children seek intimacy with parents prior to turning to peers. Siblings also appear to be a source of intimacy (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985a), although little is known about how intimacy in sibling relationships changes with age.

In the present study, we sought to provide an account both of developmental changes in children's desires for companionship and intimacy and of the people they turn to for these experiences. Self-report questionnaires were used rather than observational methods because children's preferences about whom they want to interact with and what they desire from those interactions are largely subjective phenomena, and, accordingly, self-report methods provide a reasonable means of assessment. Children's perceptions or construals of their relationships do not represent, however, objective accounts of their experiences. Although it would be desirable to collect observational as well as self-report data to investigate directly the relations between children's objective experiences and personal accounts, this was beyond the scope of this study.

Because our goal was to create a broad map of developmental changes and continuities, we defined companionship and intimacy in ways that would be appropriate for children across the age range studied. Companionship was defined as engaging in enjoyable activities with others, whereas intimacy was defined in terms of disclosing personal thoughts and feelings with others. These

definitions do not capture all the components or nuances of these constructs. Some authors, including Sullivan, have defined intimacy more broadly to include such features as genuineness, trust, and emotional support (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980, Sharabany et al., 1981). These other aspects of intimacy and companionship were not assessed because they are more abstract in nature and, therefore, difficult for the younger children in the study to comprehend. By defining the constructs in simple terms, we hoped to eliminate the possibility that age differences in ratings are due to developmental changes in the comprehension of questionnaire items. Although the terms were simple, we believe that our definitions succeed in capturing the most central behavioral referents of these constructs. The chief limitation of the present strategy is that it did not allow us to examine developmental changes in the manifest behaviors that are associated with the core experiences of companionship and intimacy.

## Method

### Subjects

Children in the second, fifth, and eighth grades (ages 7.5, 10.4, and 13.4, respectively) were chosen as subjects to correspond to Sullivan's juvenile, preadolescent, and early adolescent periods, respectively. The sample consisted of 63 girls and 66 boys in the second grade, 75 girls and 78 boys in the fifth grade, and 64 girls and 71 boys in the eighth grade. Subjects were predominately Caucasian children of middle- to upper-middle-class families living in a suburban public school district.

### Measures

*Measurement design*—Companionship and intimacy were assessed at two levels. At the global level, subjects were asked to report about their social relations in general. At the dyadic level they reported about relations with up to eight specific people, including mother, father, most important grandparent, most important sibling, most important teacher, best same-sex friend, best opposite-sex friend, and romantic boyfriend or girlfriend. These relationships were selected because they are the ones children most frequently list as important in their lives (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985b). Subjects also made two types of ratings about companionship and intimacy at both the global and dyadic levels. Perceived importance ratings were intended to assess the strength of the desire or preference to achieve companionship and intimacy in relations. Perceived

frequency ratings were intended to assess children's perceptions of how much companionship and intimacy they actually experience

**Measure construction**—To construct the scales, we drew on a core pool of six items adapted from the companionship and intimacy scales of Furman and Buhrmester's (1985b) *Network of Relationships Inventory*. All scales were constructed by rewording these items to assess the two levels (global vs dyadic) and two types (perceived importance vs frequency) of measures. The global perceived frequency of companionship and intimacy scales each contained three items, children rated how much companionship and intimate disclosure they experience in social relations in general on five-point scales (from 1 = little or none to 5 = extremely much). The companionship items were (a) How much do you play around and have fun with other people? (b) How much do you go places and do things with other people? and (c) How much do you spend free time with other people? Intimacy items were (a) How much do you share your secrets and private feelings with other people? (b) How much do you have people to tell everything to? and (c) How much do you have people to talk with about things that you don't want others to know? The global importance of companionship and intimacy scales used the same six core items, but the subjects were asked to rate how important they were on five-point scales (from 1 = not very important to 5 = more important than anything). For example, one item was, How important is it to you to go places and do things with other people?

The eight perceived frequency of dyadic companionship and the eight perceived frequency of dyadic intimacy scales were constructed by rewording the global items so as to ask about levels of companionship and intimate disclosure with eight specific people. For example, a companionship item read, How much do you play around and have fun with this person? The question was followed by a list of up to eight people (see preceding comments), each followed by its own five-point rating scale. Items were also written to assess the importance of dyadic companionship and intimacy. Owing to the length and repetitiveness of the questionnaire battery,

we limited the 16 dyadic importance measures to one item each.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Procedure*

The battery of questionnaires was administered to groups of children in schools. Second graders were divided into small groups of four to eight children so they could be given individual attention. Because of poor reading ability or uncooperative behavior, 11 second graders had to be excluded from the study.

#### *Psychometric Analysis*

**Scale reliabilities**—Internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were computed for each of the scales. The coefficients for the four global level scales ranged from .34 to .73 for second graders ( $M = .55$ ), from .60 to .72 for fifth graders ( $M = .65$ ), and from .53 to .79 for eighth graders ( $M = .67$ ). The coefficients for second graders were somewhat low, and these scales were given special consideration in later analyses.

Coefficient alphas for the perceived frequency of dyadic companionship and intimacy scales were computed separately for each of the 16 scales. The coefficients ranged from .56 to .84 ( $M = .76$ ) for the second graders, from .73 to .93 ( $M = .86$ ) for fifth graders, and from .77 to .95 ( $M = .90$ ) for eighth graders. Thus, the reliabilities for all three grades were satisfactory.

**Intercorrelations among scales**—Correlation coefficients were computed to examine the interrelations between the companionship and intimacy scales within each level and type of measure. For the global measures, the correlations ranged from  $r = .23$  to  $r = .52$ ,  $M = .38$  (all coefficients significant at  $p < .05$ ). For the dyadic measures, the coefficients ranged from  $r = .41$  to  $r = .73$ ,  $M = .57$  (all  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ). Thus, as one would expect, the different measures were positively correlated, but the correlations were moderate in size indicating that the scales measure distinguishable constructs.

## **Results**

### *Companionship*

**Global ratings**—We expected little developmental change in global ratings of companionship between the second and eighth

<sup>1</sup> Owing to space limitations, the findings for the importance of dyadic companionship and intimacy measures will not be reported here but can be obtained from the first author upon request. In general, the patterns of findings are nearly identical to those found for the perceived frequency of dyadic companionship and intimacy scales, respectively.

grades A grade  $\times$  sex analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed an effect of grade for the global importance of companionship scores,  $F(2,387) = 2.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . Follow-up analyses of this and all subsequent significant effects were carried out using Newman-Keuls tests and the  $p < .05$  level of significance. Eighth graders rated companionship as significantly less important than did second and fifth graders,  $M = 3.64$  versus  $M = 3.82$  and  $M = 3.83$ , respectively. A similar effect of grade was found for ratings of the global perceived frequency of companionship,  $F(1,396) = 2.98$ ,  $p < .01$ , with second graders reporting more companionship than eighth graders,  $M = 3.64$  versus  $M = 3.35$ . The mean for fifth graders fell between those for the other two grades and was not significantly different from either,  $M = 3.37$ . Although significant, the absolute size of these grade differences is less than one-third of a scale point (on a five-point scale) and is therefore largely consistent with predictions. The ANOVAs also revealed a main effect of sex for global importance of companionship scores,  $F(1,387) = 6.06$ ,  $p < .01$ , with girls' scores,  $M = 3.85$ , being higher than boys' scores,  $M = 3.67$ .

*Dyadic companionship*—Repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted on the perceived frequency of dyadic companionship scores to evaluate differences among ratings of network members in their perceived roles as companionship providers. Sex and grade were treated as independent variables, whereas ratings of six of the eight relationships were treated as repeated dependent variables.<sup>2</sup> The analysis revealed an effect of type of relationship,  $F(5,1380) = 176.19$ ,  $p < .01$ , and a grade  $\times$  type of relationship interaction,  $F(10,1380) = 17.05$ ,  $p < .01$ . Table 1 presents the means for each type of relationship for each grade and sex.

As expected, family members and same-sex friends were perceived as providing relatively equivalent levels of companionship by second graders, and they were rated as providing more companionship than teachers and opposite-sex friends. In the fifth grade, relationships with mothers and fathers were rated higher than relationships with same-sex friends and siblings, with the latter being rated higher than opposite-sex friends, all these relationships were rated higher than re-

lationships with teachers. Same-sex friends were perceived as the greatest source of companionship in the eighth grade. Ratings of companionship with mothers, siblings, fathers, and opposite-sex friends all fell near the midpoint and were not significantly different from each other. Ratings of companionship with teachers were very low in the eighth grade.

Separate grade  $\times$  sex ANOVAs were subsequently conducted for ratings of each of the eight types of relationships. Significant effects of grade were revealed for all relationships except siblings, all  $F$ 's  $> 5.20$ ,  $p < .01$ . As expected, companionship with parents decreased with age. Fifth graders reported greater companionship with their mothers than second and eighth graders, whereas the ratings by the latter groups did not differ from each other. Relationships with fathers were rated as providing decreasing companionship with age, with the mean for each age-group significantly lower than the previous age-group. A similar pattern of decreasing companionship was found for relationships with teachers and grandparents. In contrast to relationships with adults, companionship with peers tended to increase with age. Relationships with opposite-sex friends were rated higher by eighth graders than by second and fifth graders. There was a significant effect of sex for ratings of same-sex friendships,  $F(1,359) = 4.04$ ,  $p < .05$ , and a sex  $\times$  grade interaction,  $F(2,368) = 3.75$ ,  $p < .05$ , which qualified the grade effect. Follow-up comparisons revealed that ratings by boys did not significantly differ across the three grade levels, whereas ratings by girls increased significantly between fifth and eighth grades. The ANOVAs also revealed significant effects of sex for ratings of the perceived frequency of companionship with boy- or girlfriend,  $F(1,149) = 4.57$ ,  $p < .05$ , with girls' scores ( $M = 3.43$ ) being higher than boys' ( $M = 3.08$ ).

*Correlations between global and dyadic companionship*—Correlation coefficients were computed between ratings of the global perceived frequency of companionship and scores for each of the eight perceived frequency of dyadic companionship scales. This analysis was done to determine developmental changes in the ability of each dyadic

<sup>2</sup> Ratings of relationships with grandparents and boyfriends/girlfriends were not included in these analyses because second graders did not rate these relationships. Separate analyses were, however, carried out to examine grade and sex effects for ratings of these relationships. For all repeated measures ANOVAs, the probability levels that are reported have been calculated using the Greenhouse-Geisser procedure to adjust degrees of freedom.

TABLE 1

MEAN RATINGS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF COMPANIONSHIP WITH EIGHT NETWORK MEMBERS

|                     | GRADE                        |                              |                            |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                     | 2                            | 5                            | 8                          |
| <b>Girls</b>        |                              |                              |                            |
| Mother              | 3.39 (1.24) <sup>1,a,b</sup> | 3.83 (95) <sup>1,a</sup>     | 3.34 (98) <sup>2,b</sup>   |
| Father              | 3.45 (1.18) <sup>1,b</sup>   | 3.73 (94) <sup>1,a</sup>     | 3.08 (1.22) <sup>2,c</sup> |
| Closest sibling     | 3.58 (1.03) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3.43 (94) <sup>2,a</sup>     | 3.36 (74) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Teacher             | 2.53 (96) <sup>2,a</sup>     | 2.09 (95) <sup>3,b</sup>     | 1.32 (51) <sup>3,c</sup>   |
| Same-sex friend     | 3.28 (1.03) <sup>1,b</sup>   | 3.58 (1.14) <sup>1,2,b</sup> | 3.96 (74) <sup>1,a</sup>   |
| Opposite-sex friend | 2.36 (1.29) <sup>3,b</sup>   | 2.11 (1.01) <sup>3,b</sup>   | 3.20 (95) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Boyfriend           |                              | 3.17 (1.25) <sup>b</sup>     | 3.69 (97) <sup>a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                              | 3.13 (1.10) <sup>a</sup>     | 2.36 (1.00) <sup>a</sup>   |
| <b>Boys</b>         |                              |                              |                            |
| Mother              | 3.43 (1.03) <sup>1,a,b</sup> | 3.68 (94) <sup>1,a</sup>     | 3.09 (82) <sup>2,b</sup>   |
| Father              | 3.47 (1.03) <sup>1,b</sup>   | 3.63 (1.18) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3.21 (89) <sup>2,c</sup>   |
| Closest sibling     | 3.42 (1.25) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3.28 (1.11) <sup>2,a</sup>   | 2.98 (97) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Teacher             | 2.38 (89) <sup>2,a</sup>     | 1.77 (77) <sup>3,b</sup>     | 1.51 (70) <sup>3,c</sup>   |
| Same-sex friend     | 3.48 (80) <sup>1,a</sup>     | 3.28 (1.08) <sup>2,a</sup>   | 3.46 (1.00) <sup>1,a</sup> |
| Opposite-sex friend | 2.29 (1.14) <sup>3,a,b</sup> | 2.16 (1.07) <sup>3,b</sup>   | 2.77 (95) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Girlfriend          |                              | 2.89 (1.23) <sup>b</sup>     | 3.28 (97) <sup>a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                              | 2.74 (1.10) <sup>a</sup>     | 2.27 (99) <sup>a</sup>     |

NOTE.—The numbers in superscripts indicate the rank order of the means across relationships within each grade (columns). Relationships means with the same number rank in the same column are not significantly different. The letters in superscripts next to each mean indicate the rank order of means across the three grade levels within each type of relationship (rows). Means with the same letter rank in the same row are not significantly different. The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

rating to predict global judgments about levels of companionship in social life at large. It seems reasonable to interpret the size of the coefficients as indicating how much attention or weight children give to experiences in a particular relationship when making judgments about social life in general. For example, when second graders are asked to judge how much companionship they experience in general, their thoughts may focus on relationships with parents because they are the most salient people in their social worlds. If so, then a high correlation should result between global ratings and ratings of relationships with parents because the two types of ratings are essentially based on summaries of the same experiences. To the degree that the subjective weighting process employed by children reflects the actual importance of

particular relationships in providing desired forms of interaction, these coefficients may also indicate how important or pivotal these relationships are in supplying social provisions. Because means and correlation coefficients are statistically independent from one another, the correlational analyses supplement the analyses of mean level differences and provide another way to examine developmental changes in the roles of different network members.

Coefficients were computed separately for boys and girls in each of the three grades so that developmental changes in the predictive power of different types of relationships could be examined. Fischer's  $r$  to  $z$  transformations were used to compare coefficients statistically.<sup>3</sup> Table 2 depicts the correlations

<sup>3</sup> Because the reliabilities of the global level scales varied across the three grades, we initially thought it might be difficult to interpret grade differences in coefficient size. Consequently, a preliminary analysis was carried out in which coefficients were statistically corrected for attenuation owing to unreliability of the measures. The correction adjusted the reliabilities across grades to be equal to the highest observed reliability (usually the reliability coefficient of the eighth grade scores). These analyses revealed that the corrected coefficients were uniformly larger, particularly for the second graders. A comparison of corrected and uncorrected coefficients indicated, however, that the differences in reliabilities across grades did not influence the basic patterns of significant grade differences among coefficients. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to interpret the uncorrected coefficients.

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RATINGS OF GLOBAL AND DYADIC PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF COMPANIONSHIP

|                     | GRADE               |                        |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
|                     | 2                   | 5                      | 8                         |
| <b>Girls</b>        |                     |                        |                           |
| Mother              | 56 <sup>1 a</sup>   | 46 <sup>1,2 a</sup>    | - 25 <sup>2 3 b</sup>     |
| Father              | 52 <sup>1 a</sup>   | 34 <sup>1,2 a</sup>    | - 19 <sup>2 3 b</sup>     |
| Closest sibling     | 44 <sup>1, a</sup>  | 33 <sup>1,2 a b</sup>  | 00 <sup>2 b</sup>         |
| Teacher             | 39 <sup>1, a</sup>  | 27 <sup>2 b</sup>      | - 10 <sup>2 3 b</sup>     |
| Same-sex friend     | 47 <sup>1, a</sup>  | 52 <sup>1 a</sup>      | 38 <sup>1, a</sup>        |
| Opposite-sex friend | - 05 <sup>2 b</sup> | 37 <sup>1,2 a</sup>    | 36 <sup>1 a</sup>         |
| Boyfriend           |                     | 31 <sup>1, a</sup>     | 27 <sup>1 a</sup>         |
| Grandparent         |                     | 46 <sup>1,2 a</sup>    | - 29 <sup>3 b</sup>       |
| <b>Boys</b>         |                     |                        |                           |
| Mother              | 16 <sup>1 b</sup>   | 53 <sup>1, a</sup>     | 41 <sup>2 3 4, a, b</sup> |
| Father              | 24 <sup>1, a</sup>  | 37 <sup>1,2 3 a</sup>  | 54 <sup>1,2, a</sup>      |
| Closest sibling     | 02 <sup>1 a</sup>   | 23 <sup>3 4 a</sup>    | 25 <sup>3 4 a</sup>       |
| Teacher             | 22 <sup>1, a</sup>  | 13 <sup>4 a</sup>      | 22 <sup>4 a</sup>         |
| Same-sex friend     | 05 <sup>1 b</sup>   | 44 <sup>1,2 a</sup>    | 65 <sup>1, a</sup>        |
| Opposite-sex friend | - 02 <sup>1 b</sup> | 20 <sup>3 4 a, b</sup> | 42 <sup>2 3 4 a</sup>     |
| Girlfriend          |                     | 35 <sup>2 3 a</sup>    | 45 <sup>2 3 a</sup>       |
| Grandparent         |                     | 29 <sup>2 3 4 a</sup>  | 32 <sup>3 4 a</sup>       |

NOTE —The numbers next to coefficients indicate the rank order of coefficients across relationships within each grade (columns). Coefficients with the same number rank in the same column are not significantly different. The letters next to each coefficient indicate the rank order of coefficients across the three grade levels within each type of relationship (rows). Coefficients with the same letter rank in the same row are not significantly different  $r_s > .23, p < .05, r_s > .33, p < .01$

between the global perceived frequency of companionship scores and ratings of perceived companionship for eight types of relationships. The pattern of developmental differences is very similar to those obtained in the analyses of mean level differences. The findings are somewhat different for boys and girls. Coefficients for boys' and girls' ratings are significantly different for second graders' ratings of relationships with mothers, siblings, and same-sex friends and for eighth graders' ratings of relationships with mothers, fathers, grandparents, and same-sex friends. For girls, ratings of companionship with family members (mothers, fathers, siblings, and grandparents) are moderately predictive in the second and fifth grades, mean  $r = .50$  and  $r = .40$ , in the eighth grade, ratings of companionship with family members are negatively related with global ratings of companionship, mean  $r = -.18$ . This stands in contrast to girls' ratings of same-sex friends, which are moderately predictive across all three grade levels,  $r = .47, r = .52$ , and  $r = .38$ , respectively.

For boys, ratings of companionship with family members are not very predictive in the second grade, but they are positively related in both the fifth and eighth grades, mean  $r = .35$  and  $r = .38$ . Boys' ratings of same-sex

friends increased in predictiveness with age,  $r = .05, r = .44$ , and  $r = .65$ , respectively, increasing significantly between the second and fifth grades. Ratings of companionship with opposite-sex friends increase significantly from second to fifth grades for girls, from  $r = -.05$  to  $r = .37$ , and, from second to eighth grades for boys, from  $r = -.02$  to  $r = .42$ . Ratings of boyfriends and girlfriends are moderately predictive of global companionship for boys and girls in the fifth and eighth grades, mean  $r = .33$  for fifth graders and  $r = .34$  for eighth graders.

*Intimacy*

We expected an increase in the global ratings of intimate disclosure between the second and fifth grades. Contrary to this expectation, the univariate ANOVAs indicated that there were no significant grade differences in ratings of either the global importance of intimacy or the global perceived frequency of intimacy. There were noteworthy sex differences, however, for ratings of global importance of intimacy,  $F(1,3870) = 15.91, p < .01$ , and global perceived frequency of intimacy,  $F(1,396) = 6.22, p < .01$ , with girls rating the importance of intimacy ( $M = 3.43$ ) and the perceived frequency of intimacy ( $M = 2.66$ ) higher than boys ( $M = 3.07$  and  $M = 2.46$ ).

TABLE 3

MEAN RATINGS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF INTIMACY WITH EIGHT NETWORK MEMBERS

|                     | GRADE                        |                            |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
|                     | 2                            | 5                          | 8                            |
| <b>Girls</b>        |                              |                            |                              |
| Mother              | 3 48 (1 11) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3 44 (1 19) <sup>1,a</sup> | 3 07 (1 31) <sup>2,b</sup>   |
| Father              | 3 55 (1 00) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3 24 (1 17) <sup>1,a</sup> | 2 57 (1 30) <sup>3,b</sup>   |
| Closest sibling     | 3 03 (1 25) <sup>2,a</sup>   | 2 67 (1 28) <sup>2,a</sup> | 3 12 (1 20) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Teacher             | 2 39 (94) <sup>3,4,a</sup>   | 1 84 (98) <sup>3,b</sup>   | 1 26 (60) <sup>4,c</sup>     |
| Same-sex friend     | 2 83 (1 20) <sup>2,3,b</sup> | 3 26 (1 25) <sup>1,b</sup> | 3 79 (95) <sup>1,a</sup>     |
| Opposite-sex friend | 2 14 (1 42) <sup>4,b</sup>   | 1 84 (97) <sup>3,b</sup>   | 3 01 (1 16) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Boyfriend           |                              | 2 75 (1 43) <sup>b</sup>   | 3 31 (1 15) <sup>a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                              | 2 71 (1 10) <sup>a</sup>   | 1 92 (1 00) <sup>b</sup>     |
| <b>Boys</b>         |                              |                            |                              |
| Mother              | 3 09 (1 15) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3 43 (1 33) <sup>1,a</sup> | 2 88 (1 12) <sup>1,2,b</sup> |
| Father              | 3 02 (1 05) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 3 27 (1 33) <sup>1,a</sup> | 2 83 (1 13) <sup>1,2,a</sup> |
| Closest sibling     | 2 72 (1 09) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 2 62 (1 36) <sup>2,a</sup> | 2 72 (1 10) <sup>2,a</sup>   |
| Teacher             | 2 15 (92) <sup>2,a</sup>     | 1 66 (87) <sup>4,b</sup>   | 1 36 (74) <sup>3,c</sup>     |
| Same-sex friend     | 2 95 (1 08) <sup>1,a</sup>   | 2 76 (1 28) <sup>2,a</sup> | 3 19 (93) <sup>1,a</sup>     |
| Opposite-sex friend | 2 01 (1 02) <sup>2,b</sup>   | 2 06 (1 18) <sup>3,b</sup> | 2 69 (97) <sup>2,a</sup>     |
| Girlfriend          |                              | 2 72 (1 41) <sup>b</sup>   | 3 15 (1 20) <sup>a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                              | 2 60 (1 06) <sup>a</sup>   | 2 07 (99) <sup>b</sup>       |

NOTE—The numbers in superscripts indicate the rank order of the means across relationships within each grade (columns). Relationships means with the same number rank in the same column are not significantly different. The letters in superscripts next to each mean indicate the rank order of means across the three grade levels within each type of relationship (rows). Means with the same letter rank in the same row are not significantly different. The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*Perceived dyadic intimacy*—The repeated measures ANOVA of the perceived frequency of dyadic intimacy scores revealed effects of sex,  $F(1,282) = 5.26, p < .05$ , relationship type,  $F(5,1410) = 110.02, p < .01$ , a two-way interaction of relationship type and grade,  $F(10,1410) = 16.12, p < .01$ , and a three-way interaction of relationship type  $\times$  grade  $\times$  sex,  $F(10,1410) = 3.38, p < .01$ .<sup>4</sup> Table 3 presents the means of intimacy ratings for the eight relationships broken down by grade and by sex. Since the patterns of findings are complex, we will highlight only the major results.

In the second grade, all children reported that relationships with mothers and fathers provided the most intimate disclosure. Girls' ratings for parents were significantly higher than ratings of relationships with siblings and same-sex friends, whereas boys' ratings of the four were not significantly different. Relationships with teachers and opposite-sex friends were rated as being the least intimate by both boys and girls.

In the fifth grade, relationships with mothers and fathers continued to be rated the

most intimate. Girls' ratings of relationships with same-sex friends, however, had risen to be equivalent to those of parents. This was not the case for fifth-grade boys, whose ratings for same-sex friends were significantly lower than ratings for mothers and fathers. A cluster of relationships made up of siblings, grandparents, and boyfriends/girlfriends were rated the next most frequent sources of intimacy for both boys and girls in the fifth grade. Relationships with opposite-sex friends and teachers continued to be rated the least intimate.

There were several noteworthy differences in the findings for boys and girls in the eighth grade. Eighth-grade girls reported that relationships with same-sex friends provided the most intimate disclosure, rating them significantly higher than the next highest relationships with mothers, siblings, opposite-sex friends, and boyfriends. Although eighth-grade boys also reported the highest levels of intimate disclosure with same-sex friends, their ratings were not significantly different from ratings for mothers, fathers, and girlfriends. Both boys and girls rated relation-

<sup>4</sup> See n 2 above.



ships with siblings and opposite-sex friends as moderately intimate, and relationships with teachers were rated the least intimate. Interestingly, eighth-grade boys reported that relationships with fathers were among their most intimate ones, whereas girls reported that relationships with fathers were among the lesser intimate ones, being more intimate than only relationships with teachers and grandparents.

Subsequent follow-up sex  $\times$  grade ANOVAs found main effects of grade for all relationships except siblings, all  $F$ 's  $> 4.68$ ,  $p < .01$ . In general, there was a tendency for intimate disclosure with adults to decrease with age, whereas intimate disclosure with peers increased with age. In particular, second and fifth graders rated their relationships with mothers and fathers as more intimate than did eighth graders. The ANOVA of ratings of intimacy with father revealed a sex  $\times$  grade interaction,  $F(1,369) = 3.46$ ,  $p < .05$ . Boys' ratings did not differ significantly across the three grade levels, whereas eighth-grade girls rated fathers significantly lower than second- and fifth-grade girls. For ratings of intimacy with grandparents, fifth graders' scores were greater than eighth graders' scores. Scores for intimacy with teachers decreased with age, with the mean for each age group significantly lower than the previous age-group.

There were noteworthy sex differences in ratings of intimate disclosure with same-sex friends. The ANOVA revealed a main effect of sex,  $F(1,368) = 7.35$ ,  $p < .01$ , and a sex  $\times$  grade interaction,  $F(2,368) = 3.19$ ,  $p < .05$ . Follow-up comparisons found that boys' ratings did not significantly differ across the three grades, although an increase between the fifth and eighth grades approached significance,  $p < .10$ . These findings for boys' same-sex friendships are not consistent with Sullivan's contention that preadolescence is that period in which friendships become markedly more intimate. The findings for girls, however, are supportive of Sullivan's position. Ratings by girls significantly increased with age, the increase between second and fifth grades approached significance,  $p < .06$ , whereas eighth-grade ratings of same-sex friendships were significantly higher than fifth-grade ratings. Comparisons of boys' and girls' scores within each grade revealed no sex differences in the second grade, in the fifth grade, girls' ratings were higher than boys' at a marginal level of significance,  $p < .10$ , in the eighth grade, the sex difference had increased such that girls'

ratings were significantly higher than boys',  $p < .01$ . Ratings of intimacy in relationships with opposite-sex friends and boyfriends/girlfriends increased markedly for boys and girls between the fifth and eighth grades. Finally, there were no significant sex differences in ratings of cross-sex peer relationships.

*Correlations between global and dyadic intimacy ratings*—Table 4 presents the correlations between the perceived frequency of global intimacy and the perceived frequency of dyadic intimacy scales. Intimacy with family members is not strongly predictive for boys or girls across all three grade levels, mean  $r = .15$ ,  $r = .27$ , and  $r = .15$ , respectively. Ratings of intimacy with teachers are modestly predictive across the three grade levels for both boys and girls. For girls, there is a marked increase in the predictiveness of ratings of same-sex friends from the second to fifth grades, from  $r = .04$  to  $r = .61$ , whereas boys' ratings of intimacy with same-sex friends are moderately predictive across all grade levels, mean  $r = .41$ . Relationships with opposite-sex friends and boy/girlfriends become strongly predictive for boys in the fifth grade, mean  $r = .54$ , but they do not become predictive for girls until the eighth grade, mean  $r = .40$ .

## Discussion

*Companionship*—Nearly all aspects of Sullivan's account of the development of companionship were supported. The moderately high and stable ratings of global companionship across the three ages studied are consistent with the view that the general desire for companionship had intensified in importance at some earlier period. The analyses of means and correlations reveal a fairly consistent picture of developmental change on whom children rely for companionship. The idea that "compeers" are desired sources of companionship in the juvenile era onward was supported by the relatively high ratings of same-sex friendships beginning in the second grade. Although Sullivan's account led us to expect that the significance of parents as companions would peak in the second grade, it peaked in the fifth grade, it did, however, decline during early adolescence as expected. It was not until early adolescence that peers were perceived as more important companions than parents. These data are consistent with Barker and Wright's (1955) findings concerning the amount of time children spend with different people, and they suggest that middle childhood is a period in which both

TABLE 4

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RATINGS OF GLOBAL AND DYADIC PERCEIVED FREQUENCY OF INTIMACY

|                     | GRADE               |                       |                         |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
|                     | 2                   | 5                     | 8                       |
| <b>Females</b>      |                     |                       |                         |
| Mother              | 31 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 35 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 01 <sup>4,a</sup>       |
| Father              | 18 <sup>1,2,a</sup> | 21 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 05 <sup>4,a</sup>       |
| Closest sibling     | - 04 <sup>2,a</sup> | 30 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 27 <sup>1,2,3,4,a</sup> |
| Teacher             | 06 <sup>1,2,a</sup> | 20 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 21 <sup>2,3,4,a</sup>   |
| Same-sex friend     | 04 <sup>2,b</sup>   | 61 <sup>1,a</sup>     | 47 <sup>1,a</sup>       |
| Opposite-sex friend | - 05 <sup>2,b</sup> | 18 <sup>2,a,b</sup>   | 37 <sup>1,2,3,a</sup>   |
| Boyfriend           |                     | 21 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 42 <sup>1,2,a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                     | 31 <sup>2,a</sup>     | 11 <sup>3,4,a</sup>     |
| <b>Males</b>        |                     |                       |                         |
| Mother              | 18 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 29 <sup>3,4,a</sup>   | 10 <sup>3,a</sup>       |
| Father              | 19 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 27 <sup>4,a</sup>     | 28 <sup>1,2,3,a</sup>   |
| Closest sibling     | 09 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 33 <sup>2,3,4,a</sup> | 26 <sup>2,3,a</sup>     |
| Teacher             | 34 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 18 <sup>4,a</sup>     | 25 <sup>2,3,a</sup>     |
| Same-sex friend     | 28 <sup>1,a</sup>   | 48 <sup>1,2,3,a</sup> | 49 <sup>1,a</sup>       |
| Opposite-sex friend | 17 <sup>1,b</sup>   | 51 <sup>1,2,a</sup>   | 29 <sup>1,2,3,a,b</sup> |
| Girlfriend          |                     | 57 <sup>1,a</sup>     | 44 <sup>1,2,a</sup>     |
| Grandparent         |                     | 21 <sup>4,a</sup>     | 08 <sup>3,a</sup>       |

NOTE.—The numbers next to coefficients indicate the rank order of coefficients across relationships within each grade (columns). Coefficients with the same number rank in the same column are not significantly different. The letters next to each coefficient indicate the rank order of coefficients across the three grade levels within each type of relationship (rows). Coefficients with the same letter rank in the same row are not significantly different.  $r_s > .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r'_s > .33$ ,  $p < .01$ .

parents and peers serve important roles as companions. Siblings are also primary providers of companionship. During early childhood, they appear to be as important as same-sex friends, with only a slight decrease in relative importance as children enter adolescence. Teachers and grandparents were perceived as moderate providers of companionship by young children, but they became dramatically less important with age.

The results also support the idea that cross-sex peer interactions during the elementary-school years are "taboo," but they become more acceptable early in adolescence (Hallinan, 1980). During the administration of the questionnaires, the fifth graders were openly resistant to the idea of being asked to single out an opposite-sex friend. The nature of their uncooperativeness suggested that it is important for preadolescents not to have friends of the opposite sex. Interestingly, the fifth graders expressed much less resistance to rating same-sex friends. Informal observations suggested that preadolescents will have romantic relationships to increase their popularity, but, consistent with the cross-sex taboo, they only interact minimally with the person

*Intimacy*—The results are somewhat less consistent with Sullivan's account of developmental changes in intimacy. There was

no support for the position that the general desire for intimacy intensifies in preadolescence. The lack of change may be due to the nature of our measures. Relatively concrete forms of intimate disclosure were assessed—for example, talking and sharing secrets. Perhaps differences would have occurred if more mature forms of intimacy, such as emotional support were assessed. Behavioral observations might also reveal that preadolescents seek and achieve greater intimate disclosure. Alternately, it could be that there are no developmental changes in the basic desire for intimacy—at least during these developmental periods. The essence of intimacy—personal sharing—may be desired even by young children. What may change are the manifest forms of intimacy. For example, young children may desire physical closeness and experience, telling a parent or sibling about a favorite movie as intimate disclosure. Only when children approach adolescence do they desire adult forms of intimacy, that is, disclosing one's innermost feelings. As adults, we think we observe an increase in intimacy around this time, when in fact we may only be observing the emergence of adultlike forms of intimacy.

In contrast to the lack of change in global ratings, marked changes occurred at the dyadic level. The examination of both means

and correlations confirms our expectation that parents, particularly mothers, are important providers of intimacy when their children are in the second grade. Perhaps younger children desire an affectionate form of intimacy that is found in attachment relationships with parents. It also could be that young children's peers do not yet have the cognitive or social skills necessary to be good providers of intimacy (Selman, 1980), and, consequently, juveniles must depend on the greater skill of parents to structure intimate interactions.

We had expected that children would report that friends are the most significant providers of intimate disclosure during preadolescence. The data are mixed. Ratings of friendships were among the best predictors of global intimacy ratings in the fifth grade. On the other hand, the mean levels of ratings indicate that parents, rather than friends, were perceived as the most frequent providers of intimacy. This apparent discrepancy may be due to the different meanings of the means and correlations. The means are likely to represent children's perceptions of how much time they spend in intimate interactions with each of their network members, whereas the correlations may reflect how subjectively important the time spent interacting is to satisfying the general desire for intimacy. For fifth-grade children, mothers and fathers may in fact be the most frequent confidants, but the intimacy provided by friends—even if it is less frequent—may be the crucial ingredient in fulfilling the desire for intimacy.

It is also important to note that Sullivan's definition of intimacy was broader than what our scales assessed. For him, intimacy is not simply interpersonal disclosure but a "collaborative" relationship that is based on mutual caring and sensitivity and on reciprocal sharing and disclosure. The sharing that goes on between young children and their parents is probably not reciprocal in nature, parents listen to their children, but they disclose very little in return (Youniss, 1980, Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Thus, it may not be until close friendships are formed in preadolescence or early adolescence that children establish close egalitarian relationships in which intimate disclosure is reciprocal and mutual.

Other family members are also perceived as significant sources of intimacy. Siblings are seen as moderately important providers across all three age groups. Grandparents appear to hold a place similar to that of siblings in the fifth grade, but their significance drops off sharply in early adolescence. Outside the family, teachers are perceived as relatively

unimportant sources of intimacy and become even less important with age.

The findings concerning relationships with peers are more complex. Although similar in second-grade children, the mean levels of girls' and boys' ratings of same-sex friendships differ in fifth-grade children. For girls, there was a steady increase in the perceived level of intimate disclosure in friendships that began in preadolescence and continued into early adolescence. Similarly, the correlational results for girls showed a striking increase during preadolescence in the significance of same-sex friends as intimacy providers. These findings confirm, at least for girls, that preadolescence is a period in which disclosure between friends rapidly increases in importance.

There is little evidence that boys' same-sex friendships go through a similar developmental increase. Same-sex friends appear to be moderately important providers of intimacy for boys across all three age periods. Perhaps boys' friendships become more expressive and open at some later point in adolescence, but available data suggest that this is probably not the case (Aries & Johnson, 1983, Morgan, 1976). Rather, it appears that male-male friendships never achieve the same level of intimate disclosure as female-female friendships. This difference is consistent with traditional adult masculine and feminine stereotypes that hold that women are open and expressive in relationships with each other, whereas men are more task-oriented and reserved. Our data suggest that this sex difference in relationship patterns first emerges during preadolescence.

The failure to find the expected developmental changes in boys' ratings of friends does not necessarily invalidate Sullivan's contentions about the nature and importance of chumships. It may be that interpersonal disclosure is not the means through which boys achieve intimacy in friendship. Sullivan (1953) believed that consensual validation is the defining feature of intimacy. "Intimacy is the type of situations involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth. Validation of personal worth requires a type of relationship which I call a collaboration, by which I mean clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in pursuit of increasingly identical—that is, more and more nearly mutual—satisfaction." (p. 246) Perhaps preadolescent boys form collaborative friendships in which sensitivity to needs and validation of worth are achieved through actions and deeds, rather than

through interpersonal disclosure of personal thoughts and feelings. Future research should focus on identifying the potential differences in the ways that boys and girls express sensitivity to friends' needs and validate their worth.

The findings concerning intimacy in cross-sex peer relationships also reveal interesting sex differences. The mean ratings clearly indicate that intimacy with opposite-sex friends and boyfriends and girlfriends sharply increases between the fifth and eighth grades. The correlational results, however, paint a somewhat different picture. Similar to the change in the mean levels of ratings, girls' ratings of opposite-sex peers do not substantially predict global ratings until the eighth grade. Boys' ratings of opposite-sex peers, on the other hand, are strongly predictive in the fifth grade. This latter finding suggests that opposite-sex relationships during preadolescence may be functionally more important for boys than the mean levels of ratings would suggest. Despite the limited extent of interaction, preadolescent boys may find girls to be more sensitive and expressive disclosure partners and thus better able to provide this type of intimacy. This appears to be the case in adulthood where both men and women report that they are more disclosing in their interactions with females than in their interactions with males (Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). Clearly, further research is needed on the nature and significance of cross-sex relationships.

The present results represent an initial step in the growth of our understanding of the development of social needs. Research examining the patterns of relations among social needs, personal relationships, emotional experiences, and social competence could provide the basis for the integrative theory of social development which all of us desire.

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