

## 4 Cognitive Representations of Adolescent Romantic Relationships

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Romantic relationships are a new and exciting arena for adolescents. As they embark on these relationships, they try out unfamiliar behaviors, experiment with different ways of interacting, and acquire new skills. They have to make sense out of many novel, often surprising experiences. Much time is devoted to thinking or talking about their boyfriend or girlfriend and their relationship. They may wonder what a particular interaction meant or how each feels about the other. Sometimes they mentally enact different hypothetical scenarios with romantic partners, using past relationship experiences to anticipate their own and their partner's response to a given situation.

These thoughts, beliefs, and expectations concerning romantic relationships vary from person to person. For example, when faced with a family problem, one adolescent may think that she should turn to her partner to seek comfort and guidance. Another may feel that she should keep the problem to herself, fearing that the other would consider the problem to be insignificant and would not be interested. A third may feel it is important to seek out her partner, yet may think she is likely to be dissatisfied with the other's effort to comfort her. Such thoughts or representations of relationships are expected to guide an individual's behavior and serve as a basis for predicting and interpreting others' behavior. Social scientists have described these representations using terms such as schemas, scripts, prototypes, or working models. In the present chapter, we use the term *views* to refer to such representations of relationships. We are reluctant to introduce another term to the long list of seemingly similar concepts, but have chosen

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to do so because of some differences in conceptualization that are discussed subsequently. For the present, suffice it to say that our particular conceptualization of views is based on attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) but is intended to be more general in application. That is, attachment theorists have been principally concerned with working models of attachment figures, the self in attachment relationships, and attachment relationships. We think, however, that the basic concepts of working models and attachment styles can also be applied to other relationships. Just as individuals have sets of rules for the organization and accessibility of information relevant to attachment (Main et al., 1985), they also have sets of rules and expectations for other relational experiences.

In the present chapter, we discuss how these concepts that were originally used to describe attachment relationships can be broadened to apply to adolescent romantic relationships. We begin by comparing and contrasting parent-child relationships and romantic relationships. We suggest that the attachment system is significant in both relationships but that the affiliative, sexual, and caretaking systems also play important roles in romantic relationships. In the second section of the chapter, we discuss how the particular characteristics of relationships influence cognitive representations of them and propose a hierarchical model of views. Whereas the first two sections focus on romantic relationships in general, the third section looks more closely at the distinct features of adolescent romantic relationships and the ways in which they may impact adolescents' romantic behavior, their developing romantic views, and the manner in which these views are expressed. In the fourth section of the chapter, we consider how the cognitive development of adolescents may influence their views and their expression. In the fifth section, we illustrate how these issues influence the measurement of views by describing our measures that were developed from this conceptualization.

### **Parent-Child and Romantic Relationships**

Parent-child relationships and romantic relationships share some critical features and differ on others. With respect to similarities, attachment theorists have proposed that both types of relationships can be conceptualized as attachment relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1988). That is, adults' romantic relationships may serve functions similar to those of children's relationships with parents. For example, both the infant in a parent-child relationship and an adult in a romantic relationship regularly seek proximity to their respective relationship partner. A parent or a

romantic partner may function as a safe haven, such that when either an infant or an individual in a romantic relationship experiences discomfort or perceives a potential threat, he or she turns to the parent or partner for comfort and protection. Both an infant and someone in a romantic relationship may also use their respective relationship partners as a secure base from which to explore the environment and take on new challenges. Additionally, each reacts to separations or potential threats to the relationship with demonstrations of protest. Finally, the loss of either a parent or a partner is grieved.

Although parent-child and adult romantic relationships may both be attachment relationships, there are important differences between them. In parent-child relationships, the roles are asymmetrical, with the parent being responsible for taking care of the child but not the reverse (at least not while the latter is a child). Ideally, the attachment behavioral system of the child and the caretaking system of the parent system are coordinated with each other. When in danger or distress, the child may engage in attachment behaviors and seek out the parent; perceptions of danger to the child or the child's distress should activate the caretaking system in the parent.

In romantic relationships, the roles are reciprocal. Each may seek out caretaking from the other on some occasions, and each may provide care for the other in other instances. In effect, each partner becomes attached to the other and serves as an attachment figure to the other. At the same time, it does not seem accurate to argue that each person parents the other, as the symmetrical nature of the relationship makes the caretaking qualitatively different from that a parent provides to a child.

Another obvious difference between romantic and parent-child relationships is the element of sexuality. Sexual attraction plays an important role in the choice of romantic partners. Once a partner is chosen, sexual behavior becomes a central facet of the relationship and may foster an attachment bond (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994).

Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988) recognized these differences between parent-child and romantic relationships, and consequently proposed that romantic love involves the integration of the attachment, caregiving, and sexual/reproductive behavioral systems. We believe that not only are these three systems involved, but an affiliative system is as well (Furman, in press; Furman & Wehner, 1994).

By the affiliative system, we refer to humans' biological predisposition to seek out and interact with known others. Throughout evolutionary history, human beings have lived in groups (Foley, 1989). Affiliative behavior afforded protection from predators and provided opportunities for coopera-

tive food sharing, mutualism, reciprocal altruism, and social play (see Caporeal, Dawes, Orbell, & van de Kragt, 1989; Furman, *in press*). In contemporary societies, affiliative interactions with peers, including romantic partners, continue to serve critical functions. The symmetrical nature of peer relationships provides an egalitarian context in which individuals learn and practice skills of cooperation, mutual exchange, collaboration, intimate self-disclosure, and consensual validation of personal worth. Over the course of development, these peer relationships move from collaborative play to intimate friendships to intimate romance. In this way, the affiliative behavioral system may underlie the mutuality, collaboration, reciprocity, and co-construction that are characteristic of all peer relationships, including romantic relationships.

In summary, attachment processes seem to play central roles in early parent-child relationships and romantic relationships, but romantic relationships also entail elements of affiliation, mutual caretaking, and sexuality. These similarities and differences in the characteristics of the two types of relationships have important implications for how cognitive representations of these relationships should be conceptualized, the topic turned to next.

### **Views of Parent-Child and Romantic Relationships: A Hierarchical Model**

The fact that both parent-child and romantic relationships could be conceptualized as attachment relationships led Shaver and Hazan (1988) to suggest that similar frameworks can be used to describe individual differences in how these relationships are approached. That is, both types of relationships can be classified using the three primary attachment categories - secure, anxious-avoidant (dismissing), and anxious-ambivalent (preoccupied). Like the young child who has a secure relationship with a parent, a person with a secure romantic attachment would be comfortable turning to a partner at times of distress. Someone with an anxious-avoidant attachment would avoid depending on a parent or partner. Finally, an individual with an anxious-ambivalent attachment to a parent or partner would find it difficult to be comforted by the other because of uncertainty concerning the other's availability.

Whereas the same general categories seem appropriate for classifying either infants' or adults' approaches to their attachment relationships, the indices of these categories differ developmentally. In infants' attachment relationships with caretakers, these patterns are manifested in the infant's

behavior, whereas in adult romantic relationships, the corresponding patterns are reflected not only in behavior, but also in their expectations or cognitive representations concerning attachment behavior. That is, the nature of infants' representations of parent-child attachment are likely to be event-based, with the degree of representational abstraction being limited to concrete behavioral patterns (Stern, 1985). Adults' representations are more cognitively differentiated and complex. They include not only representations of behavioral patterns, but also abstract knowledge systems about the meaning of behaviors, related affects, and the relationship of these to models of self and others.

In the last decade, numerous investigators have documented differences among the three romantic attachment styles that are consistent with findings concerning differences in parent-child attachment (see Shaver & Hazan, 1993). For example, individuals with secure romantic attachment styles cope with stress by seeking social support (Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993), whereas those with an avoidant style tend to withdraw from their partners when stressed (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Those with an anxious-ambivalent style are preoccupied with their partners' responsiveness (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeny & Noller, 1990).

Differences also exist concerning caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation. With respect to caretaking behavior, securely attached men display more emotional support, reassurance, and concern for their partner's well-being than avoidant men, who show the opposite pattern (Simpson et al., 1992). Anxious-ambivalents (preoccupied individuals) report overinvolvement and insensitive caretaking (Kunce & Shaver, 1994). They often assert their own feelings and needs without adequate regard for those of their partners (Daniels & Shaver, 1991). In terms of sexuality, avoidant individuals are prone to engaging in uncommitted sexual relations (Simpson & Gangstead, 1991). As to affiliation, those with secure styles have romantic relationships characterized by trust, friendship, enjoyment, mutuality, self-disclosure, compromise, and a collaborative problem-solving orientation (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeny & Noller, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1994; Lopez et al., 1997). Avoidant individuals are relatively uninvested in romantic relationships (Shaver & Brennan, 1992). They feel bored and distant during interactions (Tidwell, Reis, & Shaver, 1996), scorn self-disclosure (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991), and use disengaged communication strategies (Daniels & Shaver, 1991). Preoccupied individuals, on the other hand, are overcontrolling in their interactions (Kunce & Shaver, 1994). They disclose too much or too soon (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991) and use self-focused communication strategies (Pistole, 1989).

Taken together, these findings suggest that such individual differences in cognitive representations play an important role in romantic relationships. The fact that differences are found not only in attachment behavior but also in caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation suggests, however, that these are not representations of attachment per se. Instead, they may be better conceptualized as representations of relationships or, in our terminology, *relational views* (Furman & Wehner, 1994). For example, a person with a secure view of a romantic relationship may not only think that she or he should be able to turn to a partner at times of distress, but also may value taking care of the other, desire to invest energy in the process of constructing a mutual relationship, and value the affectionate and caring elements of sexuality. Someone with an avoidant or dismissing view may have little interest in caretaking, little investment in a relationship, see sex as an opportunity for experimentation or self-gratification, and not consider a partner as someone to turn to at times of distress. Finally, someone with an anxious-ambivalent or preoccupied view may not only find it difficult to feel comforted by a partner when distressed, but may also be overly concerned about a partner's problems (i.e., compulsive caretaking), overly invested in relationships in a self-sacrificing manner, and perceive sexual behavior as a way to make oneself feel worthy. Thus, we believe that individuals have views or representations of a romantic relationship that refer to and reflect the functioning of all four behavioral systems. In effect, such views are expectations regarding intimacy and closeness, which may be enacted in terms of attachment, caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation.

We also propose that views are hierarchically organized (see Collins & Read, 1994, for a similar conceptualization). As shown in Figure 4.1, individuals have views of particular relationships, types of relationships (e.g., romantic relationships), and close relationships in general. The views of particular relationships and particular types of relationships center on the behavioral systems and other characteristics that are particularly salient in those relationships. Thus, views of romantic relationships include expectations or beliefs concerning attachment, caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation in romantic relationships, whereas views of relationships with parents may be focused on attachment to a parent.

The different layers of the hierarchy are interdependent. Thus, our views of close relationships in general are based on an integration of our representations and experiences in different relationships, but our general views also influence those concerning particular relationships.

This multilayered organization provides a means of accounting for continuities and discontinuities across views of different relationships. In par-

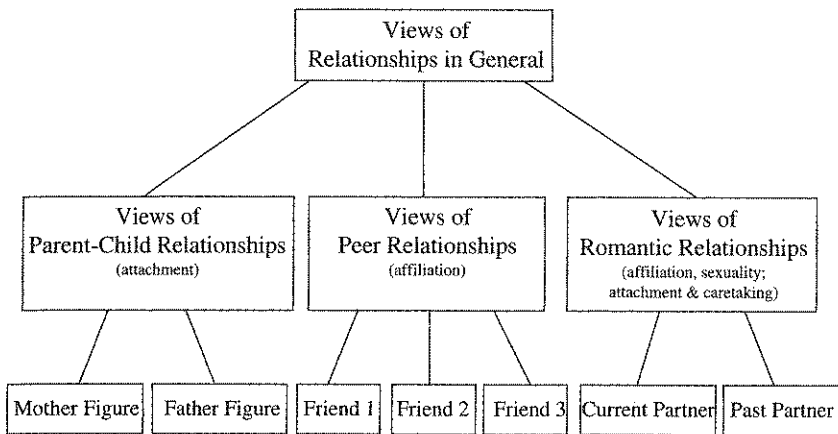


Figure 4.1. Hierarchical model of views.

ticular, early experiences with parents influence not only views of intimacy and closeness in those relationships, but also views of intimacy and closeness in close relationships in general (see Collins & Sroufe, this volume, for a similar perspective). Accordingly, a person with a secure attachment to the primary caretaker is likely to approach other relationships expecting closeness and intimacy, and thus engage in affiliative, caretaking, sexual, and attachment behaviors that promote closeness and intimacy, which in turn reinforce such views. Consistent with these ideas, early attachment relationships have been found to be linked to friendships in childhood and adolescence (see Collins & Sroufe, this volume; Rothbart & Shaver, 1994). By the same reasoning, links are expected between early attachment relationships and romantic relationships. The existing data are consistent with this idea but consist primarily of adults' retrospective reports of their childhood attachment relationships (see Rothbart & Shaver, 1994).

Although early attachment experiences are expected to be key influences in the development of views about romantic relationships, they are not expected to be the exclusive determinant of them. Experiences with peers should also play an important role in shaping views about close relationships in general, which, in turn, should influence views of romantic relationships, especially with regard to expectations about reciprocity, mutuality, and other affiliation-related features. Although the links between friendships and romantic relationships have not been studied as extensively,

we have found significant associations in several studies (see Furman, in press; Furman & Wehner, 1997).

One's own experiences in romantic relationships play particularly critical roles in shaping one's views of these relationships (Furman & Flanagan, 1997). After all, to be effective, views should be open to changes or further elaboration that reflect the experiences someone has had. Individuals come into these relationships with expectations derived from past close relationships, and such expectations should influence the pattern of interactions with romantic partners. Yet if the experiences in romantic relationships differ enough from existing expectations, views of these relationships are expected to change. For example, breakups lead some individuals with secure romantic styles to develop insecure styles, whereas some people with avoidant styles become secure when they establish a new relationship (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994). When romantic experiences are similar to those in past relationships, prior expectations are reinforced and further elaborated.

The importance of romantic experiences in shaping romantic views is underscored by the fact that the partner, as well as oneself, influences the course of the interactions that occur. The partner's role is particularly important, as the two individuals' preexisting views do not necessarily correspond with one another. In fact, couples' preexisting internal working models and their self-reports of attachment styles are relatively unrelated or moderately related at most (see Furman & Flanagan, 1997). The relatively modest correspondence is not surprising, as views are expected to play a bigger role in shaping the relationship that does develop than in determining to whom one is attracted. Similarity, physical attraction, infatuation, and availability are expected to play a bigger role in the initiation of relationships than views do.

Consequently, individuals may approach each other with different expectations in the early stages of a romantic relationship. For example, one person may believe that others can be turned to at times of distress, but may have a partner who does not turn to others and who is not particularly responsive to such overtures. One would expect the experiences of at least one person, and probably of both, to be somewhat different from their expectations. The experiences may even be sufficiently different from prior expectations to lead to some reevaluation of their romantic views. In fact, premarital couples' working models of their romantic relationship correspond more than their models of their parent-child relationships, suggesting that their experiences together lead to some changes and convergence in the models of these relationships (Owens et al, 1995).



Because the partners differ, one's experiences in different romantic relationships are likely to vary. Those relationships that are longer or involve more commitment are expected to have a greater impact on romantic views than short-lived liaisons. Similarly, as romantic relationships become more serious and gain increasing importance in the hierarchy, their influence on general views of relationships increases.

Finally, although we have emphasized the role of one's own experiences in close relationships, other factors affect these representations as well. Individuals develop expectations by observing their parents' marriage and, in many cases, divorce and remarriage. Additionally, they see and hear of their peers' and older siblings' adventures in the romantic arena. Cultural norms also exist regarding the timing and nature of such relationships (Simon, Bouchev, & Furman, *in press*). Images of heterosexual relationships are pervasive in the mass media. Images of gay and lesbian relationships are less common and often stereotypic, but these images, including the fact that they are infrequent, influence expectations and attitudes regarding homosexual relationships.

In summary, we propose a hierarchical model of views as an integrative framework for conceptualizing cognitive representations of close relationships. Such a model takes into account both the similarities and differences among the characteristics of different relationships, as individuals are expected to have views of different types of relationships that reflect the various behavioral systems that are particularly salient in those relationships. Thus, views of parent-child relationships center on the attachment system, whereas those of romantic relationships involve coordinated representations of multiple behavioral systems, including affiliation, sexuality, and caretaking, as well as attachment.

The hierarchical model also includes some mechanism for accounting for continuity across different relationships. Views of particular relationships or types of relationships are expected to influence views of close relationships in general, which, in turn, influence views of other relationships. At the same time, this model recognizes that lawful discontinuities may exist, as the views of particular relationships are influenced by experiences in those relationships, as well as by general views.

### **Adolescent Romantic Relationships**

In the preceding sections, we discussed romantic relationships in general. Most of the comments seem applicable to both heterosexual and homosexual relationships, although gay, lesbian, or bisexual individuals who are in

the process of developing a sexual identity may have different views of their same-sex and other-sex romantic relationships. Most of the comments seem applicable to both adult and adolescent romantic relationships, but the differences between adult and adolescent relationships also influence the nature of their views.

In adult romantic relationships, marital and long-term partners are key figures in the functioning of the attachment, caregiving, sexual, and affiliative systems. However, attachment and caregiving processes are not likely to be central in most adolescent relationships. Some features of an attachment relationship may be present, such as proximity-seeking or serving as a source of support or a safe haven; however, other features, such as separation protest or serving as a secure base, are not characteristic of most adolescent relationships (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). Typically, parents continue to serve as primary attachment and caregiving figures until at least late adolescence. Romantic partners are not expected to emerge as primary attachment figures or major recipients of caretaking until an individual begins to develop long-term relationships.

Sexual and affiliative processes are likely to be more central in adolescent relationships than attachment or caretaking are. Some element of sexuality is involved in almost all, if not all, romantic relationships. The emergence of the sexual behavioral system figures importantly in the developmental shift from intimate friendships to intimate romance. Similarly, affiliative features are also quite prominent in these relationships. In the eyes of a 15-year-old, dating partners are beneficial because of the companionship and intimacy they provide (Feiring, 1996). Much of the time together is spent doing things or simply "hanging out."

The centrality of adolescent affiliative processes implies that friendships play a particularly important role in the development of adolescent romantic relationships (Furman, *in press*). After all, many of the social competencies learned in establishing friendships, such as those involved in intimacy and companionship, are required for developing romantic relationships as well. Some of the functions of dating, including recreation, autonomy seeking, status seeking, and social skills practice, also overlap with those of friendship (Grinder, 1966; Skipper & Naas, 1966).

By the same line of reasoning, representations of affiliation in peer relationships are likely to influence our representations of affiliation in relationships in general, which, in turn, may serve as a basis for the representations of affiliation in romantic relationships. Consistent with this idea, high school students' views of friendships have been found to be related to their views of romantic relationships (Furman, *in press*). Interestingly, views of

parent-child relationships were not strongly related to views of romantic relationships in middle adolescence, but they were related to such views in late adolescence (Furman & Wehner, 1997). Perhaps the links between parent-child and romantic relationships become stronger as attachment and caretaking processes become more salient features of romantic relationships. The changes may also occur as relationships with parents become more egalitarian in nature, and affiliative or reciprocal features begin to play a bigger role in those relationships as well.

Up to this point, we have focused on the implications of the idea that adolescents are less likely than adults to have attachment relationships with their romantic partners. Of course, many adults may not have a long-term attachment relationship with a romantic partner at a particular time, but even the short-term relationships of adults and adolescents are likely to differ. During adolescence, romantic relationships are newer and less well established, and teens are more likely than adults to expect that their romantic liaisons will be short-lived.

In addition, adolescents' romantic relationships commonly serve functions other than attachment, caretaking, affiliation, or sex, particularly in early adolescence. For example, status grading and status achievement are often accomplished through these early relationships and appear to be normative developmental phenomena (Brown, this volume; Skipper & Naas, 1966). Compared to adults, adolescents are novices in the romantic arena, and they spend much of their teenage years exploring the various facets of romantic life and developing their identities as romantic partners.

Adolescents are also likely to experiment with different types of romantic relationships. In adolescence, there is an emerging capacity to think about future, hypothetical, or ideal selves. Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that these possible selves serve a motivational function in clarifying which selves are to be approached and avoided. From this perspective, role experimentation, either with different types of romantic partners or with different ways of behaving in a relationship, should be viewed as a normative phenomenon. In fact, adolescents state that they often behave falsely in their dating relationships, suggesting that they recognize that their behavior may not reflect who they are (Harter & Lee, 1989).

Just as these relationships are new and experimental to adolescents, so are their corresponding views. Their representations are more limited than those of adults, who have acquired the firsthand experience necessary to articulate and clarify their specific belief systems. Consequently, views of romantic relationships may be less developed in adolescence, and a certain degree of relationship experience (and, perhaps, cognitive develop-

ment) may be required before these representations become more clearly articulated.

In fact, the novelty of romantic relationships for adolescents may render them particularly open to new information as they explore a variety of romantic relationships and experiment with ways of relating to their romantic partners. Romantic views are likely to be influenced by relationship experiences with parents and peers, but adolescents may also have more opportunities to disconfirm preexisting views. That is, in the course of experimentation and exploration, they may find themselves in relationships that provide experiences that are novel or inconsistent with their expectations. Accordingly, different patterns of relational behavior may be required, and accommodating these experiences with existing views may in some instances result in the development of belief systems that are different from those held about other types of relationships.

One implication of this idea of experimentation is that adolescents' views of romantic experiences and their actual experiences may be less related than when they are more experienced in this arena. Based on our interviews with adolescents, it appears that many have a series of relationships that are often quite different from one another. A substantial number describe at least one anomalous relationship or "mistake." For example, some describe having several supportive relationships but also having one conflictual, perhaps even abusive, relationship. Such anomalies can occur because individuals' selection of dating partners is strongly influenced by factors other than their relationship views; thus, a partner's behavior may not be congruent with one's own views. Such lack of correspondence seems especially likely to occur in adolescence, when individuals are inexperienced, experimenting with different kinds of relationships, and not seeking a long-term relationship. At the same time, we believe that views play an important role in determining what one learns or fails to learn from a relationship, be it a mistake or not. Thus, secure individuals are expected to learn more from their experiences than insecure ones, who may find themselves repeating the same mistakes.

In summary, in the previous section, we concluded that the concept of views can be applied to romantic relationships as well as parent-child relationships, but that the differences between the two types of relationships lead to some differences in the content of the representations of these relationships. In this section, we have shown that the contrast is even more striking when we consider adolescent romantic relationships and the centrality of affiliative and sexual processes to these relationships. The fact that the relationships are not attachment relationships, are frequently short-

term, and often contain novel experiences all have implications for the nature of their views.

The contrast between parent-child relationships and adolescent romantic relationships also illustrates why we propose that views are representations of relationships rather than just of attachment. If views are representations of attachment per se, it is not clear why they would be expected to influence relationships in which attachment processes do not play a central role. Yet, working models of parental attachment in childhood are predictive not only of the subsequent course of attachment relationships, but also of relationships with nonattachment figures such as friends or peers (e.g., Collins & Sroufe, this volume; Elicker, Eglund, & Sroufe, 1992; Youngblade & Belsky, 1992). Such links with nonattachment relationships are understandable, however, if children develop not only expectations regarding attachment, but also expectations of intimacy and closeness in general, which may be enacted in terms of affiliation, caretaking, and sexuality as well as attachment. One could think of these as attachment representations if one uses a broad definition of attachment, but such an approach means that one has attachment representations of nonattachment relationships. Any distinction between attachment and nonattachment relationships seems to be blurred. Accordingly, we suggest that they are best thought of as representations of relationships, and not just the attachment system per se.

### **The Developmental Status of Adolescents**

In the previous section, we argued that the romantic views of adolescents and adults differ because of differences in the nature of their romantic relationships and the behavioral systems that are salient in each. Moreover, adolescents and adults are developmentally different, leading to some unique qualities of adolescents' relationship views.

A number of cognitive changes occur during adolescence that impact the nature and organization of relationship views. Thinking and reasoning, for example, become increasingly abstract, multidimensional, and self-reflective (see Keating, 1990). Adolescents become better able to compare several complex mental representations simultaneously. Such growing information processing capabilities allow adolescents to contemplate their own internal worlds of thoughts and feelings and to compare them with those of others, mental activities that were previously unavailable during childhood.

These developments provide adolescents with new cognitive tools for processing relational information and making sense of their relationship

experiences. For example, adolescents' increased information processing capabilities, more complex reasoning skills, and better ability to think about abstract aspects of the self and others facilitate the reevaluation and updating of relationship views (Kobak & Cole, 1994). Advances in perspective-taking and self-reflection allow adolescents to compare existing views with potential alternatives and to conceive of their views as changeable rather than static constructions. These developments render adolescent views amenable to change through personal insight and reflection, whereas alterations of childhood views are thought to require concrete changes in relationship experiences (Main et al., 1985).

Although these cognitive developmental advances render adolescents' relationship views qualitatively different from those of children, their representations are not yet comparable to those of adults. In particular, the acquisition of these new cognitive skills does not imply that they are uniformly applied across all domains or contexts. After all, *découpage* is more characteristic of development than uniformity (Fischer, 1980). One factor that critically influences the use of higher-level reasoning skills is familiarity with the content area about which the person is reasoning (Kuhn, Amsel, & O'Loughlin, 1988; Kuhn, Ho, & Adams, 1979). Similarly the advances in adolescence in working memory, allocation of available resources, and automatizing of these processes are dependent upon one's level of experience in a given area (Chi, 1978; Chi, Glaser, & Rees, 1982; Glaser, 1984). Accordingly, the content, organization, and expression of adolescents' relational views depend on both the development of new cognitive structures and adolescents' experience in a particular type of relationship. In other words, the lack of experience in romantic relationships may restrict the emergence of more developmentally sophisticated reasoning about these particular relationships, even after these cognitive skills have been demonstrated in other, more familiar domains.

A comparison of parent-child and romantic relationship views nicely illustrates the interaction between cognitive development and domain-specific experience. Adolescents' views of parent-child relationships are likely to be relatively well established as the result of years of experience and interactions in these relationships. The developmental task with respect to their views of parent-child relationships is primarily to reexamine and update them as adolescents become more autonomous and their relationships with parents are transformed. Adolescents' familiarity with parent-child relationships facilitates the application of their newly acquired cognitive tools to this domain, making it possible for parent-child relationship views to be reformulated in the absence of actual relationship changes.

Romantic relationships, on the other hand, are new to adolescents. Because they are just learning what to expect in these relationships, the content, organization, and expression of their romantic views are expected to be at a different developmental stage than their views about parental relationships. In effect, the developmental task for adolescents is to gain the requisite experience for elaborating their romantic views and integrating their experiences. Thus, differences in the level of experience in parent-child and romantic relationships should lead us to expect differences in the levels of reasoning or cognitive skills applied to thinking about these relationships. The application of newly acquired cognitive tools should emerge later for romantic views than for parent-child views.

For these reasons, we expect to see a great deal of development in the sophistication and elaboration of romantic views over the course of adolescence. Young adolescents initially enter romantic relationships with primitive views of what these relationships are apt to be like. As previously noted, these early romantic views are likely to be derived from past experiences with parents and peers, as well as from cultural norms, media representations, and observations of others' romantic relationships (e.g., those of parents, older siblings, and peers). The expectations derived from these "raw materials" are then further elaborated through specific romantic experiences with various partners. As adolescents become more familiar with these relationships, they can then begin to compare their experiences across different romantic relationships and form experientially based expectations about what these relationships are apt to be like.

Increased familiarity in the domain of romantic relationships should then facilitate more effective application of emerging abstract reasoning skills. Recursive perspective-taking, or the ability to take a third person's perspective, begins to emerge in early to middle adolescence (Selman, 1980). Initially, adolescents may find it difficult to take such a perspective in their romantic relationships because of their heightened self-consciousness in this unfamiliar and challenging domain. As they become more comfortable, however, they may be able to develop a better understanding of their partners' motivations and behavior. Nevertheless, we expect that such insights into current relationships may lag somewhat, as the benefits of hindsight are not available. Moreover, for better or worse, infatuation and passion can make it hard to view things objectively (see Larson, Clore, & Woods, this volume).

To this point, we have emphasized the developmental advances that occur during adolescence and the corresponding changes in romantic views. However, cognitive advances often bring about certain liabilities,

rendering individuals prone to various cognitive errors as they struggle to control the application of new cognitive skills to unfamiliar, emotionally laden, and personally stressful domains (Harter, 1990). Such errors may influence not only how adolescents think about specific types of relationships, but also the consistencies they are able to perceive about themselves across their hierarchy of relationship views. For example, young adolescents may be more likely to engage in "imaginary audience" behavior about romantic relationships, falsely assuming that real or potential romantic partners are as concerned with their behavior and appearance as they are themselves (Elkind, 1967). Accordingly, they may be more likely to overpersonalize their experiences with real or potential romantic partners.

Whereas underdifferentiation may occur in young adolescents' reasoning about romantic relationships, overdifferentiation may be present in their reasoning about parental relationships. As adolescents begin to develop a more autonomous identity, parents may become prime targets of their "personal fable" in which they perceive themselves as unique (Elkind, 1967). That is, they may feel that parents are very different from themselves and could not possibly understand their experiences. Such feelings may lead young adolescents to create overly rigid boundaries between their conscious perceptions of their relationships with parents and those with others. They may fail to appreciate the influence parents have had on their romantic behavior, and may not see the similarities in their behavior toward parents and romantic partners. As the cognitive capacities to integrate aspects of their relational selves through the use of abstract knowledge systems emerge in middle to late adolescence, the capacity to observe and articulate links among various relationships should become more apparent (Harter & Monsour, 1992).

In summary, adolescence is a period in which marked advances in cognitive skills occur. Such advances are expected to have a major impact on the sophistication, organization, and expression of their relationship views. These new cognitive skills require some experience in the romantic domain before they can be fully and effectively applied, but as that experience is acquired, these skills provide adolescents with the tools for integrating their experiences and developing elaborated, abstract representations of their relationships.

Although developmental advances in cognitive reasoning are generally anticipated, adolescents vary in the degree to which they acquire these skills. In fact, those with insecure parental attachments perform more poorly on measures of formal operational reasoning and deductive reason-



ing than do those with secure attachments (Jacobsen, Edelstein, & Hoffman, 1994). Additionally, insecure individuals may also be less able to take advantage of the cognitive skills they acquire, as insecure models of relationships are believed to be less open to new experiences and reexamination than secure models are (Bowlby, 1988). Thus, variations in the quality of close relationships with parents, other adults, and peers may produce individual differences in both the acquisition of new cognitive skills and adolescents' ability to apply them to their romantic relationships.

Finally, the application of these cognitive skills to the romantic domain may also be delayed for those individuals who have few opportunities for romantic experience because of familial or cultural constraints.

### **The Measurement of Adolescent Romantic Views**

The points raised in this chapter have important implications for the measurement of adolescents' views of romantic relationships. We tried to address these issues in the instruments we developed for assessing such views.

To assess internal working models of romantic relationships, we developed a Romantic Relationship Interview. This instrument was derived from the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview, the classic measure of working models of parent-child relationships (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985). Other investigators have adapted that interview to assess romantic relationships (e.g., Crowell & Owens, 1996; Silver & Cohn, 1992), but their interviews focus on a marriage or a committed relationship. Our Romantic Relationship Interview was also derived from Main's seminal work, but was intended for adolescents or young adults who do not necessarily have a committed relationship or, for that matter, a current relationship of any kind. The interview does, however, require that they have a moderate amount of experience in the romantic arena, such that their answers reflect their own experiences and not just stereotypical or cultural expectations.

Whereas the other interviews focus on the marital or premarital relationship, our interview typically assesses experiences in a number of different relationships. Most questions ask about the one or usually two relationships deemed most important, but adolescents commonly refer to other relationships when answering various questions. A married person's working model of romantic relationships is likely to be based on the marriage, but an adolescent's model may be influenced by experiences in a number of different relationships.

Like the other romantic interviews, our interview assesses caretaking as well as attachment features. Thus, questions are asked about how the per-

son responds when the partner is upset, as well as how the partner responds when the subject is upset. The interview also assesses affiliative features, such as mutuality. Ideally, the interview would tap the sexual features as well, but this seems difficult to do in a face-to-face interview with an adolescent. Some adolescents, however, particularly late adolescents, discuss such topics spontaneously.

The coding system for the interview is intended to parallel those of other attachment interviews and includes scales assessing inferred experiences in particular relationships, other scales assessing discourse, and an overall classification. The inferred experiences scales were partially derived from the Current Relationship Interview scoring system (Crowell & Owens, 1996) and include particular indices of attachment, caretaking, and affiliation. Scales are included to assess both the individual's behavior and the behavior of each of the primary partners. Scales for each partner are included, as his or her behavior is expected to have a major impact on the nature of the relationship and the subject's behavior in that relationship.

One of Main's critical contributions was to distinguish between the past relational experiences individuals have had and their current states of mind. Past relational experiences have a major impact on current states of mind with regard to such attachment relationships, but the correspondence is not perfect. Some individuals have had very rejecting, neglecting, or overinvolved parents but manage to develop a secure state of mind with regard to these figures. For that matter, children commonly have a secure relationship with one parent and an insecure relationship with the other (Fox, Kimmerly, & Schafer, 1991) but seem to develop a single state of mind.

The distinction between experiences and states of minds seems particularly important for assessing adolescents' romantic views, as we have suggested that they are often experimenting in these new relationships, and many have diverse experiences across relationships. Thus, we previously suggested that the early romantic experiences per se may not be as critical as what the adolescents learn from them or how they are integrated into a state of mind. Accordingly, our interview uses the same indices of coherence as the other attachment interviews for assessing state of mind. The interview itself, however, was modified to address the idea that adolescents' abstractions, particularly about romantic relationships, may be developmentally and experientially constrained. While still trying to "surprise the unconscious," we provide increased scaffolding in the sequence and manner of questioning in order to facilitate adolescents' discourse about their

romantic experiences. Thus, the interview is designed to provide the structure necessary to draw out adolescents' thought processes while preserving opportunities to elucidate individual differences in the nature of their working models about romantic relationships.

Just as in the case of the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview, the various scales assessing coherence serve as the primary basis for an overall classification of romantic working models. In particular, individuals are categorized as having secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or unresolved/disorganized working models of romantic relationships. Although these categories were originally designed for the classification of representations of attachment relationships, we find that representations of adolescent romantic relationships and friendships can be readily classified into these categories in most instances. The fact that they seem classifiable suggests that these are representations of relationships and not of attachment per se.

The issues raised in the present chapter also influenced the development of a self-report measure of adolescent romantic styles, the Behavioral Systems Questionnaire. Like the Adolescent Romantic Relationship Interview, this questionnaire examines perceptions of romantic relationships in general rather than just one relationship. Questions are included about affiliation, caretaking, and sexuality, as well as attachment. For each of the four domains, scales assessing secure, preoccupied, and dismissing styles are included. Corresponding scales in the four different domains are relatively highly related, suggesting that the perceptions of the different behavioral systems are coordinated. Similar measures also exist for assessing styles of parent-child relationships and friendships. Consistent with a hierarchical model of views, perceptions of different types of relationships have been found to be related, but not so highly as to suggest that individuals have one style for all relationships (see Furman, in press; Furman & Wehner, 1994, 1997).

Finally, it should be noted that we have developed both self-report and interview measures because they appear to assess different aspects of views. The self-report measures tap *conscious styles*, whereas the interview is intended to assess internal, partially unconscious *working models*, which reflect more automated processing (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Conscious and unconscious representations of relationships do not correspond very highly to one another, seemingly because of defensive processes and other factors (Borman-Spurrell, Allen, Hauser, Carter, & Coie-Detke, 1993; Crowell et al. 1993). By examining both styles and working models, however, we should be able to obtain a comprehensive picture of adolescents' representations of these relationships.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed how the concept of cognitive representations or views can be applied to romantic relationships as well as parent-child relationships. We suggested that long-term adult romantic relationships can be conceptualized as attachment relationships, but that the sexual, caretaking, and affiliative systems are also important features of these relationships that are reflected in individuals' views of these relationships. Accordingly, we proposed a hierarchical model of views to take into account both the similarities and differences among the characteristics of different relationships. The hierarchical model also includes some mechanism for accounting for continuity and discontinuity across different relationships. That is, views of particular relationships or types of relationships are expected to influence views of close relationships in general, which, in turn, influence views of other relationships. The greater the similarity of the different relationships, the more carryover one might expect, underscoring why romantic views may be influenced by friendships and past romantic relationships, as well as by parent-child relationships.

The preceding points seem particularly apposite for adolescents' romantic relationships. The novelty of these relationships and the relatively short-term nature of most of them suggest that aspects other than attachment per se are central in adolescents' views. Affiliative experiences in peer relationships may play particularly important roles in shaping the early representations of relationships. Moreover, because of their limited experience in romantic relationships and their stage of development, adolescents may have less articulated views, which are prone to various cognitive biases.

Thus, representations of adolescent romantic relationships are likely to be somewhat different in nature than the classic ideas of attachment working models or styles. Our intent, however, is not to criticize these classic concepts but rather to point out the ways in which these ideas need to be modified to be applicable to adolescent romantic relationships. With such modifications, these ideas should prove to be valuable in elucidating the nature of adolescent romantic relationships. After all, the concept of attachment styles has already proven quite fruitful in studying adult romantic relationships (see Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Moreover, in many of these studies, a significant proportion of the subjects were not involved in long-term relationships, and yet meaningful differences were found among the three attachment styles; thus, it appears that these concepts can be applied to short-term, nonattachment relationships – that is, the kinds of relationships that adolescents are likely to have.

In fact, we have successfully used the measures of relational styles and working models described in this chapter in our ongoing research on adolescent romantic relationships (see Furman, in press; Furman & Wehner, 1997). It is hoped that this chapter will stimulate further work on adolescents' representations of their relationships so that we may have a better understanding of the factors that shape the nature of their experiences.

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