A framework for examining developmental changes in romantic relationships is presented. The chapter describes research illustrating these developmental differences and delineates an agenda for subsequent developmental work.

Adolescent Romantic Relationships: A Developmental Perspective

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If we were to look back at our romantic experiences, most of us would be struck by the changes that have occurred in our relationships. Our early forays could usually be characterized as superficial or awkward, yet quite important to us at the time. Over the course of adolescence and adulthood, we gained further experience and learned ways of interacting. Typically relationships became more "serious" and lasted longer. At some point many, though not all, of us became involved in a long-term, committed relationship, such as a marriage.

Although it is clear that romantic relationships typically undergo many changes over the course of development, social scientists have yet to delineate the precise nature of such changes. Most of the empirical work has focused on romantic relationships in the college years or adulthood, and relatively few studies have examined romantic relationships in adolescence. Almost no work has considered age differences in these relationships. As a consequence, we have little scientific data on the developmental course of romantic relationships.

In the present chapter, we present a theoretical framework that considers some of the developmental changes in these relationships. We describe several empirical studies that have examined age differences, and conclude by outlining an agenda for subsequent work. Although we focus on age-related changes in romantic relationships, we also discuss some of the changes that occur over the course of particular relationships.

We describe changes that commonly occur over the course of development, but it is important to emphasize at the outset that there is not a single path of romantic development. Romantic relationships are quite diverse in nature, both across and within cultures (Dion and Dion, 1996). The timing and intensity of romantic involvement varies. During adolescence, some individuals are more interested in romantic relationships than others and are further along the developmental pathway they are taking. The sequence of dating experiences is also far from fixed and is often influenced by chance meetings and events. We suspect that some adolescents are more likely than others to get involved in a long-term relationship, but such involvement also depends on whether one happens to have met the "right person." Finally, there is not a single endpoint or aim. Many individuals get married or develop a long-term committed relationship, but others do not. The line from the children's song, "First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Junior in a baby carriage," may apply in some instances, but not in others. Thus the descriptions of developmental changes that are presented here are not intended as universals, but they are believed to be common age-related changes and can thus shed light on the social processes involved in these relationships.

This chapter principally discusses developmental changes in heterosexual relationships. Many of the ideas are expected to be applicable to homosexual relationships, but some important differences can be expected as well. For example, passionate friendships—platonic yet intense relationships—may be more likely to play an important role in the romantic development of lesbian, bisexual, and gay youth than in the romantic development of heterosexual youth (see Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dube, in press).

A Behavioral Systems Conceptualization

In an attempt to integrate the insights of attachment and neo-Sullivanian theories, we developed a behavioral systems conceptualization of romantic relationships (Furman and Wehner, 1994). In particular, we proposed that a romantic partner can become a major figure in the functioning of the attachment, caregiving, affiliative, and sexual behavioral systems. That is, the partner may serve as an attachment figure, who is sought out at times of distress; conversely, the individual may provide similar support, comfort, and caregiving to the partner. The person may turn to the partner for companionship and friendship, as romantic relationships provide rich opportunities for cooperation, mutualism, reciprocal altruism, and the co-construction of a relationship (Furman, in press). Finally, the individual may turn to the partner for sexual fulfillment.

Of course most of these functions are not necessarily met in romantic relationships. Adolescents have other individuals in their social networks who can serve as attachment figures, affiliative partners, or individuals to whom they provide care. These individuals are organized into a hierarchy according to their importance to the adolescent. A romantic partner is expected to become

part of this hierarchy of figures and gradually move up in importance in the hierarchy as the relationship develops. For example, an individual may be less likely to seek out a partner when distressed early on in the development of a relationship than later when the relationship is more established and the level of trust is typically greater. Such changes are expected to occur not only within the course of a particular relationship but also over the course of a series of relationships. Thus, as individuals grow older and acquire more experience in various romantic relationships, they may be more likely to turn to a partner to fulfill these functions than when they were younger and less experienced (with some notable exceptions, described subsequently).

One of the reasons that age changes are expected to occur in the hierarchy of figures is that adolescents and young adults are learning how to interact with romantic partners. As an individual learns how to use a partner as an attachment, caregiving, affiliative, or sexual figure, he or she is likely to do so more frequently and more skillfully (once again, with some notable exceptions). Some of what one learns is expected to carry over to later relationships, thus making it easier to turn to subsequent partners. After all, most adults feel more comfortable and able in a romantic context than they did when they were younger.

Changes with age and experience are expected to be particularly striking during adolescence. Prior to adolescence, most children have relatively limited contact with other-sex peers because children's play occurs primarily in sex-segregated groups (Maccoby, 1988). As a consequence of such gender segregation, boys and girls develop different means of playing and exerting influence (Maccoby, 1990). With the onset of adolescence, children become interested in the other sex, but they face several challenges. They have to determine what kind of relationship they want—a romantic relationship or friendship. The former is a completely new kind of relationship, but even in the case of the latter they have to interact with a person who is likely to have a different style of interacting because of the earlier gender segregation. Moreover, they need to address the sexual desires they are feeling. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth face the additional challenge of determining who they are attracted to. Finally, they need to consider their peers' reactions to their behavior because their status in the peer group may be influenced by whether they have a romantic relationship and whether it is with the right person. Needless to say, these are complex tasks, and the early interactions or relationships are awkward experiments.

In their early relationships, adolescents are not very concerned with the fulfillment of attachment or caregiving needs or even sexual or affiliative needs. Instead, their focus is on who they are, how attractive they are, how they should interact with someone, and how it all looks to their peer group (see Brown, in press, for a similar account). Some affiliative and sexual behavior occurs, but early on adolescents are primarily learning how to affiliate with the other sex, how to engage in sexual activity, and which sexual activities to engage in. Only after the adolescent has acquired some basic competencies in interacting with the other sex does the fulfillment of affiliative and sexual needs

become a central function of these relationships. During middle adolescence, the majority of adolescents in the United States have at least one exclusive relationship, lasting for several months to perhaps a year (Feiring, 1996; Thornton, 1990). In middle adolescence, they also become less concerned with their peer status and the status value of the partner, although such considerations are still important for many individuals (Brown, Eicher, and Petrie, 1986; Dunphy, 1963; Gavin and Furman, 1989).

The attachment and caregiving systems are expected to become more significant in relationships in late adolescence and adulthood, as relationships with parents undergo transformations and the press to find a new primary attachment figure increases. In fact, extensive caregiving and fully developed attachments usually do not occur except in relatively long-term relationships. Even in long-term relationships, a romantic partner is expected to serve as a sexual figure and as an affiliative figure before becoming an attachment figure or a recipient of caregiving. Thus a romantic partner usually does not become a significant figure for all four behavioral systems until a relatively long relationship develops in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Consistent with these ideas, proximity seeking, which we consider affiliative behavior, emerges earlier in relationships than safe haven or secure base behavior (Hazan and Zeifman, 1994). Proximity seeking also emerges in romantic and peer relationships at an earlier age than either safe haven or secure base behavior. Similarly, fifteen-year-olds emphasize affiliative features when asked to list advantages of having a romantic partner, but eighteen-year-olds begin to discuss attachment elements as well (Feiring, 1993).

Age Differences in Social Support. The proposition that romantic partners would move up in the hierarchy of figures with age was supported in our earlier research on children's and adolescents' social networks (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992). In that study, 549 youth in the fourth grade, seventh grade, tenth grade, and college completed Network of Relationship Inventories, which assessed their perceptions of their relationships with parents, siblings, grandparents, same-sex friends, and romantic partners. For each relationship, they rated seven types of support they received: companionship, intimacy, instrumental help, affection, enhancement of worth, nurturance of the other, and reliable alliance—a sense of a lasting bond. A measure of overall support was derived by averaging the seven types.

The increasing importance of romantic relationships was apparent in several ways. The proportion of individuals who stated that they had a boyfriend or girlfriend generally increased with age (fourth grade, 46 percent; seventh grade, 36 percent; tenth grade, 45 percent; college, 67 percent). The number of fourth graders claiming to have such a relationship is surprisingly high, but examination of the overall support ratings suggests that a number of these relationships may have been in name only. As shown in Figure 2.1, ratings of overall support were low in the fourth grade, and showed a significant increase over the four grades, $F(3,380) = 6.60$, $p < .01$.

Figure 2.1. Mean Ratings of Support for Each Relationship
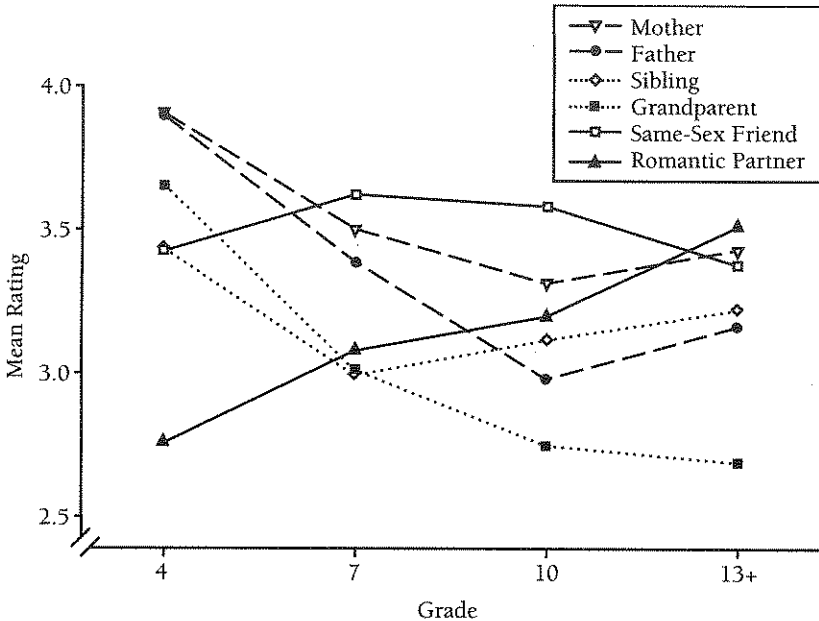Type at Each Grade Level

Figure 2.1 also illustrates that changes occurred in the amount of support in romantic relationships relative to that in other significant relationships in the network. In the fourth grade, romantic partners were ranked sixth in terms of the amount of overall support. In the seventh grade, they were tied for fourth with siblings and grandparents. In the tenth grade, they were tied for second with mothers. In college, men rated their partners as the most supportive individual in the network, whereas women gave equally high ratings to their partners, mothers, same-sex friends, and siblings.

Views of Romantic Relationships. Developmental changes are also expected in adolescents' views of romantic relationships. By views we mean perceptions of romantic relationships, of the self in relationships, and of partners (Furman and Simon, in press; Furman and Wehner, 1994). Our concept of views stems from the ideas of working models and attachment styles in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973; Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy, 1985), but is intended to be more general in application. That is, we believe that the basic concepts of working models and styles can be applied to other close relationships that are not attachment relationships, such as most friendships and adolescent romantic relationships. In other words, we conceptualize views as representations of relationships, not just as the attachment processes in these relationships.

Our conceptualization of views is intended to incorporate both conscious and unconscious, internal representations of relationships. Many of our ideas

apply to both levels of representations, but we also distinguish between these two components of views. We refer to conscious representations as *styles*, and to unconscious, internal ones as *working models*. Self-report questionnaires can be used to assess styles, whereas working models can be assessed by techniques, such as the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview (Main, Caplan, and Cassidy, 1985). The degree of correspondence between styles and working models remains controversial, but it is clear that the two are not identical (see Bartholomew and Shaver, in press; Borman-Spurrell and others, 1993; Crowell and others, 1993).

We also believe that views are hierarchically organized. That is, individuals have views of particular relationships, of types of relationships (for example, romantic relationships), and of close relationships in general. Views of different types of relationships are expected to be related but not identical. In particular, views of parent-child relationships are expected to influence views of intimacy and closeness in close relationships in general, which in turn influence how individuals approach new types of relationships. For example, a person with a secure view of attachment to parents is likely to approach other relationships expecting closeness and intimacy, and thus engage in affiliative, caregiving, sexual, and attachment behaviors that promote closeness and intimacy. A person with a dismissing view of attachment to parents may not expect others to be responsive and available, and thus may behave in a manner that results in some distance. A person with a preoccupied view may be disappointed and frustrated with the intimacy and closeness, and approach other relationships with similar expectations. By the same token, experiences with peers and views of peer relationships should also affect views about close relationships in general, particularly with regard to expectations about reciprocity, mutuality, and other affiliation-related features

At the same time, romantic views are not expected to be identical to views of parent-child relationships and friendships, because experiences in romantic relationships are expected to play a particularly important role in shaping views of these relationships. After all, to be effective, views should be open to changes that reflect experience. Adolescents may approach romantic relationships on the basis of their experiences in other close relationships, but if their experiences differ enough from existing expectations, romantic views would be expected to develop differently. The possibility that the experiences could be different is not remote either, as the partner as well the adolescent influences the interactions that occur, and the two commonly enter these relationships with different views (see Furman and Flanagan, 1997).

Age Differences in Romantic Views. The present emphasis on the role of experience implies that views may show changes as adolescents' romantic lives unfold. Romantic views may become more secure, remain consistent, or become less secure. For instance, individuals may develop more secure views of their romantic relationships if they become more able to fulfill attachment, caregiving, or affiliative needs in these relationships. A particularly supportive partner in a long-term relationship may foster secure views as well. Conversely,

insecure individuals may consciously or unconsciously recreate the insecure relationships they expect. For example, dismissing individuals may act in ways that discourage intimacy or closeness, and thus may reinforce their dismissing views. Preoccupied individuals' controlling, dependent, or overly involving behavior may lead to being rebuffed by their partners. Thus these individuals may become more skillful, but more skillful in developing the relationships they have come to expect. Finally, views may become less secure as a result of deleterious relationships or experiences, such as infidelity by a trusted partner, sexual assault, or physical abuse.

Some data suggest that views are likely to become more secure rather than more insecure. In particular, we compared the views of high school and college women, using a sample of 243 students who were predominantly Caucasian and middle-class (Furman and Wehner, 1993). We also examined the effects of romantic relationship status by dividing each age group into those who were casually dating and those who were seeing someone exclusively (going "steady" or having a serious relationship). A small number of individuals who had never dated or who were engaged, living with someone, or married were excluded from these analyses.

The samples were administered the Behavioral Systems Questionnaire to assess relational styles with romantic partners, mothers, fathers, and close friends. The measure assessed perceptions of attachment, care received, and affiliation in each of the four types of relationships; perceptions of sexuality in romantic relationships and care provided to friends and romantic partners were also assessed. Secure, dismissing, and preoccupied styles or conscious views were assessed for each behavioral system in each type of relationship (see Furman and Simon, in press; Wehner, 1992). For example, an item on the secure attachment scale was "I consistently turn to ———— when upset or worried," whereas a preoccupied affiliation item was "I want to do more things with ———— than they want to."

The corresponding attachment, care received, and affiliative scales for each of the three styles were correlated with one another in each of the four relationships (mean $r = .37$). These correlations suggest that representations of different systems are coordinated or integrated such that they can be conceptualized as *relational styles*. Accordingly, general relational scores for secure, preoccupied, and dismissing styles were calculated by standardizing and averaging the scores for the three different behavioral systems measured in each of the four types of relationships.

The stylistic scores for all relationships were subjected to two-way analyses of variance in which age and relationship status were factors. Table 2.1 presents the mean scores for each group. College women were less preoccupied and less dismissing than high school women, $F(1, 164)$'s = 7.97 and 4.96, respectively, p's < .05. Interestingly, the mean scores of the two age groups on the secure style variable were essentially identical. If this differential pattern of age differences on the secure and insecure variables can be replicated, it would suggest that the experiences incurred with age may lead individuals to feel less

Table 2.1. Mean Ratings of Relational Styles by Age and Dating Status

	High School		College	
	Casual	Exclusive	Casual	Exclusive
Romantic Partners				
Secure[R]	−.26	.49	−.21	.40
Dismissing[A,R]	.26	−.25	.07	−.55
Preoccupied[A,R]	.17	−.03	−.04	−.56
Mother				
Secure	.06	−.10	.15	.01
Dismissing[A, AxR]	.05	.19	−.05	−.50
Preoccupied[A]	−.02	.20	−.21	−.27
Father				
Secure	.09	−.17	.24	.19
Dismissing[A]	−.05	.12	−.18	−.20
Preoccupied[A, AxR]	−.09	.25	−.07	−.53
Friend				
Secure [AxR]	.12	.21	.24	−.26
Dismissing	−.00	.03	−.06	−.06
Preoccupied	.05	−.04	−.21	−.23

Note: Superscripts by variable indicate significant effects, $p < .05$. A = age, R = relationship status,

insecure in their perceptions of romantic relationships, but the perceptions of security may not increase except as a particular relationship develops. For example, individuals may learn not to be dismissing of attachment needs or overly preoccupied with romantic partners' availability and investment, but they may not be more likely to perceive them as individuals to turn to unless they have such a relationship. Alternatively, the results may simply not be fully consistent across the secure and insecure scales; after all, a decrease in insecurity would seem to imply an increase in security. In either case, it is important to note that we do not interpret the findings as suggesting that individuals start with insecure views of romantic relationships. The Behavioral Systems Questionnaire assesses security on a continuum. Subjects in the high school and college sample were also administered Hazan and Shaver's (1987) categorical measure of attachment style; 47 percent of the high school girls reported having a secure style, as did 52 percent of the college girls. Thus we believe that one's initial views of romantic relationships may stem from the views and experiences in other relationships and may be either secure or insecure. The present results simply suggest that *on average* romantic styles tend to become more secure or less insecure with age.

The analyses of the romantic style scores also revealed effects of relationship status. Women in exclusive relationships were more secure and less preoccupied and dismissing in their romantic styles than those dating more casually, $F(1, 164)$'s = 15.58, 6.02, and 24.85, respectively, p's < .05. Such differences could either stem from the effects of the relationship experience on

relational styles or reflect differences between individuals who establish longer relationships and those who do not.

Analyses were also conducted on the stylistic scores for the other types of relationships (see Table 2.1). Compared to the high school women, college women were less preoccupied and less dismissing in their stylistic views of their relationships with mothers, $F(1, 164)$'s = 7.25 and 15.16, respectively, p's < .05. The age difference in the dismissing scores, however, primarily occurred among those who had exclusive relationships, $F(1, 164) = 8.31, p < .01$. Similar age differences were found in the scores for father, $F(1, 164)$'s = 6.42 and 4.24, respectively, p's < .05, although here the interaction was for the preoccupied scores, $F(1, 164)$'s = 10.18, $p < .01$. The secure scores did not differ significantly, but the means tended to be higher in the college sample. These findings are consistent with prior work that has found increases in perceptions of support and decreases in perceptions of conflict in parent-child relationships from high school to college (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992; Shaver, Furman, and Buhrmester, 1985).

As to friendship styles, a significant interaction between age and relationship status was found, $F(1, 164) = 6.26, p < .05$. College women who had an exclusive dating relationship had less secure views than college women who did not or than high school women, regardless of their romantic status. This pattern suggests that by college, serious romantic relationships may begin to replace close friendships as a source of caregiving, affiliation, and attachment. Apparently the move from home may have a positive effect on family relationships, but either the loss of old friendships or the increased interest in romantic relationships may alter women's perceptions of friendships.

The high school students also completed a Dating History Questionnaire and the Network of Relationships Inventory described previously. Secure romantic style scores were related to satisfaction with dating, $r = .46, p < .01$, whereas preoccupied and dismissing scores were negatively related, r's = −.31 and −.18, respectively, p's < .05. Similarly, secure styles were positively correlated with perceptions of supportiveness by their romantic partners, $r = .49, p < .05$, and preoccupied and dismissing scores were negatively correlated, r's = −.22 and −.42, respectively, p's < .05.

These analyses examined overt relational styles and not internal working models of the different types of relationships (see Furman and Wehner, 1994). Internal working models may be less likely to be changed by relationship experiences and less influenced by the current nature of a romantic relationship. Some initial data, however, suggests that models, as well as styles, may be related to romantic experiences.

In particular, we examined working models of romantic relationships in a portion of the high school sample. Fifty-four women were administered a Romantic Relationship Interview that was analogous to the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview. Using Kobak's (1993) Q-sort methodology, multiple coders read transcripts of each interview and sorted seventy-two descriptors into nine categories ranging from very characteristic to very uncharacteristic.

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The descriptors focused on interview discourse and attachment-related features of the relationships. The Q-sorts were then correlated with Kobak's prototypic sorts to yield a rating of security. Just as with secure romantic style scores, the security of romantic working models was related to satisfaction with dating, $r = .40$, $p < .05$, and to perceptions of supportiveness by their romantic partners, $r = .34$, $p < .05$. Those who were in exclusive romantic relationships tended to be more secure, but the difference was not significant. Unfortunately, we were not able to administer similar interviews to the college students, and thus were not able to examine age differences in working models of relationships.

Links Across Relationships. Developmental changes may also occur in the *centrality* of constructs—that is, in the pattern of interrelations of variables (Connell and Furman, 1984). As part of our developmental conceptualization, we hypothesized that the quality of romantic relationships is influenced not only by experiences in romantic relationships but also by relationships with friends and parents. In middle adolescence, most romantic partners are expected to be affiliative and sexual figures rather than attachment and caregiving figures. Accordingly, the experiences in romantic relationships and the participants' views of these relationships may be more related to those of friendships than to those of relationships with parents. As the attachment and caregiving system become more important in romantic relationships in late adolescence or adulthood, the links with relationships with parents may become more evident.

Our previously described study on relational styles provides support for these ideas. Parallel versions of the Behavioral Systems Questionnaire were administered to assess relational styles with romantic partners, friends, mothers, and fathers. In the high school sample, all of the corresponding styles with friends and romantic partners were found to be moderately related, $m\ r = .33$. The links between parent-adolescent relationships and romantic relationships were less apparent, $m\ r = .10$, with only two of the six correlations between corresponding styles significant. Parent-adolescent styles were, however, related to corresponding styles of friendship, $m\ r = .22$.

In the college sample, all of the representations of romantic relationships were again related to corresponding ones for friendships, $m\ r = .37$, but unlike the high school sample they were also related to corresponding representations of parent-adolescent relationships in four of six instances, $m\ r = .26$. Corresponding style scores for parents and friends were also related, $m\ r = .26$.

As yet, no single study has compared the correlates of working models at two ages, but it is possible to compare the results of two different studies that have examined links across working models of different relationships. In our study of high school students, those who were interviewed about their romantic relationships were also interviewed about their friendships using an analogous interview, and about their relationships with parents using the Berkeley Adult Attachment Interview. These interviews were also transcribed and coded using Kobak's Q-sort methodology. The pattern of correlations among the secu-

rity of working model scores for the three relationships resembled that found with our stylistic measures. Ratings of security of working models of romantic relationships were significantly related to ratings of friendships, $r = .47$, $p < .01$, but only tended to be related to ratings of relationships with parents, $r = .26$, n.s. Ratings of friendships and relationships with parents were significantly related, $r = .34$, $p < .01$. In a sample of college students, however, security of models of romantic relationships was related to security of parent-child models and tended to be related to security of models of friendship (kappas = .42 and .32). Security of models of friendship and parent-child relationships were also related (kappa = .57) (Treboux, Crowell, Owens, and Pan, 1994). Thus the correlates of working models, as well as styles, may differ developmentally.

The pattern of findings is consistent with our hypotheses concerning the emergence of the different behavioral systems in romantic relationships. In middle adolescence, both romantic partners and friends are expected to be affiliative figures, and thus we expected correspondence between the representations of these relationships. In late adolescence, the links between representations of romantic relationships and relationships with parents may be more apparent as romantic relationships develop and as caregiving and attachment components begin to become more important. The links may also become stronger as relationships with parents become more egalitarian in nature.

The Nature of Change

Up to this point we have suggested that views may change with age or over the course of the development of a relationship. The data presented here are consistent with this idea, but further work needs to be done to determine precisely what may change or differ as a function of age or relationship status.

Most of the results presented here were concerned with overt relational styles and not internal working models of relationships. Some of the findings could simply reflect differences in the perceptions of their current behavior in romantic relationships rather than stable differences in their perceptions of how they approach issues of intimacy and closeness in romantic relationships. The links between romantic relationship status and one's romantic views could be accounted for by this explanation, as could other research that has found that some individuals with secure styles switch to an insecure style after a breakup, and some insecure avoidants become secure when they become involved in a new relationship (Kirkpatrick and Hazan, 1994).

At the same time, this explanation does not seem to provide a full account of these or other investigators' results. Even after controlling for relationship status differences, age differences were found for romantic style scores. The links among the style scores for different types of relationships also suggest that the romantic style scores are not just reflections of current romantic behavior. Additionally, styles are relatively stable over time, and in fact more stable than particular relationships (Kirkpatrick and Hazan, 1994). Finally, although the

data are limited, the results obtained with the working model measures typically paralleled the results found on the style measures. Thus it appears that the results do not simply reflect the current status of an individual's romantic experiences, but further work is needed to determine the relative contributions of current experiences and stable predispositions. Further work is also needed to determine whether working models change over the course of development.

We also need to determine exactly what about these representations or these relationships seems to change. One possibility is that the differences reflect differences in the *frequency* with which romantic partners are tuned to fulfill these various functions. For example, as relationships develop, individuals may seek out their romantic partners more often as affiliative or attachment figures. Similar changes may occur as individuals grow older. The increase in the supportiveness of romantic relationships from high school to college found in the Furman and Buhrmester (1992) study is certainly consistent with this idea. Moreover, the age differences in the style scores for relationships with parents and friends also parallel differences in the perceptions of support found in the Furman and Buhrmester study. That is, women's perceptions of support from mother increase from high school to college and both genders' perceptions of support from father tend to increase. At the same time, perceptions of support from same-sex friends decrease from high school to college. The measures of style and support are, however, self-report measures, and it will be important to determine if such differences occur in the frequency of actual behavior.

The observed differences could also reflect differences in how *skillfully* individuals use romantic partners to fulfill different functions. For example, as they grow older, individuals may be more skillful in eliciting comfort from their partners when they are feeling upset. Similarly, individuals may also become more skillful over the course of particular relationships as they learn about their partners. This idea is supported by other findings with our college sample. Participants completed an adaptation of Buhrmester's (1990) Adolescent Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire, which assessed perceived skillfulness in romantic relationships. Women in exclusive relationships tended to have higher ratings of skillfulness than those who were casually dating, m's = 3.71 versus 3.47, $t(51) = 1.99$, $p < .06$. Ratings of skillfulness were also positively correlated with secure romantic style scores, $r = .56$, $p < .01$, and negatively correlated with preoccupied and dismissing scores, r's = $-.44$ and $-.31$, respectively, p's < .05.

Finally, changes could occur in appraisals of *felt security*. For example, over the course of a relationship that has been relatively supportive in nature, individuals may feel increasingly certain of the other person's availability and responsiveness. Theoretically, one would expect that frequency, skillfulness, and felt security would covary. Even if they do covary, however, the age differences or relationship status differences may not occur on all three variables. For example, it seems quite possible that late adolescents may turn to their romantic partners more often and more skillfully, but middle adolescents may

feel just as secure (or insecure) as late adolescents. Alternatively, each could affect the other, leading to changes in all three variables.

An Agenda for the Future

Until quite recently, adolescent romantic relationships had received little attention from social scientists. The studies that are now emerging illustrate that these relationships are not the same as adult relationships, but they are of scientific interest, both as potential precursors to subsequent relationships and as interesting phenomena in their own right. The findings reported in this chapter provide evidence of the developmental nature of these relationships. At the same time, we have only scratched the surface of these relationships and the changes they undergo. As pointed out in the preceding section, it is unclear exactly what seems to change with age or relational experience. Several other issues also warrant further attention.

First, the present conceptualization has emphasized how romantic partners may serve as important figures in the attachment, caregiving, affiliative, and sexual systems. As yet, however, we know relatively little about how these functions are fulfilled in these relationships. For that matter, we know little about these processes in adulthood either, as relatively few observational studies have been conducted on dating and romantic relationships. Such work seems to be an essential foundation for understanding the nature of adolescent romantic relationships and the roles they play in psychosocial development.

Research is also needed on the emergence of these relationships in early adolescents' social networks. The initial relationships are short and ungainly in nature, but we need to examine their potential influence on romantic self-concept and peer status. The role of relationships with parents and same-and other-sex peers in the emergence of these relationships also warrants investigation. The studies presented here and in other research (Furman, in press; Connolly, Furman, and Konarski, 1997; Connolly and Johnson, 1996) demonstrate links in middle and late adolescence, but studies on the ties in early adolescence have not yet been conducted.

Another important topic to examine is the transformation these relationships undergo over the course of adolescence. When do individuals began to turn to partners as attachment, sexual, and affiliation figures? When do they began to provide care or support? What characteristics of individuals, partners, and relationships are associated with seeking out or fulfilling these different functions? How do they become integrated?

The studies presented here demonstrate differences as a function of age and of relationship status, but the research was cross-sectional in nature. We have inferred that the observed *differences* reflect *developmental changes* over the course of age or relationship development, but longitudinal work is needed to rule out alternative explanations, such as cohort or selection effects. Longitudinal studies of relationship development could also help us understand the transformations in affiliative, attachment, caregiving, and sexual features.

Such research could also shed light on the impact of both present relationships and past relationships. In this study we found that romantic views are related to the current status of the relationship, but we do not know whether such views have a long-term impact on relationship experiences or subsequent relationships. Longitudinal work is also needed to determine the causal links among parent-adolescent, peer, and romantic relationships.

Finally, the present chapter has focused on *common* changes that occur over the course of particular relationships or with age and experience. As noted in the beginning of the chapter, we do not expect that all individuals would follow these developmental patterns, nor do we mean to imply that the common paths are inherently better than various alternatives. In our ongoing research on romantic relationships, we have been most struck by the diversity of these relationships and the adolescents' experiences in them. The descriptions of common changes are an important initial step in understanding social processes and development, but ultimately we will need to examine the developmental changes of particular individuals and changes over the course of particular relationships. Longitudinal studies of individual trajectories or growth curves will be needed to understand the different courses and their causes and consequences. Such work should lead to a better understanding of these richly developmental phenomena.

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