

# Adolescent Girls' Relationships with Mothers and Best Friends

**Leslie A. Gavin**

*National Jewish Center for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine;  
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center*

**Wyndol Furman**

*University of Denver*

GAVIN, LESLIE A., and FURMAN, WYNDOL. *Adolescent Girls' Relationships with Mothers and Best Friends*. CHILD DEVELOPMENT, 1996, 67, 375-386. The present study examined factors associated with harmony in adolescent girls' relationships with their mothers and their best friends. A framework was proposed in which relationship harmony was expected to be related to individual characteristics of each partner and the match between the individual characteristics of each partner. 60 adolescent girls, their mothers, and their best friends participated in self-report and observational tasks. Harmonious mother-daughter partners (vs. disharmonious ones) had more similar needs, felt their needs were better met, perceived their partners as more socially skilled, and had more similar interests. Harmonious friends (vs. disharmonious ones) had more similar needs, and target adolescents perceived partners to be more socially skilled and better at meeting their needs. Observational ratings of attunement, positive affect, and power negotiation were greater in harmonious relationships with both mothers and friends. Discussion focuses on the value of a common framework for studying different relationships.

Researchers have devoted considerable attention to both parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent friendships (see Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Steinberg, 1990). However, with some notable exceptions (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gold & Yanof, 1985), most investigators have focused on only one relationship at a time. Moreover, investigators often employ different constructs to explore characteristics of these two kinds of relationships. For example, family researchers have extensively examined conflict between parents and adolescents, but we know relatively little about conflict between friends. Conversely, more is known about the role of similarity in friendships than in parent-adolescent relationships. As a consequence, research on these two relationships has remained relatively isolated from one another. Often we do not know if results pertaining to one relationship are specific to that relationship or may be applied to adolescents' relationships in general.

The purpose of the present study was to use a common theoretical framework to identify factors associated with adolescents' perceptions of harmony in relationships with mothers and best friends. By harmony, we mean frequent supportive interactions and infrequent conflictual interactions. The construct of harmony was of interest because it incorporates a wide range of supportive and conflictual relationship features, can be used to examine both family and peer relationships, and is associated with perceptions of adjustment in adolescence (Furman, 1987).

## *Relationship Harmony*

What factors may be associated with harmonious relationships? We expected such variables to fall into two categories (Furman, 1984). First, having certain individual characteristics, such as social skill, may be associated with being a good relationship partner. Second, harmony may stem from similarity between partners' individual char-

This research was supported by a W. T. Grant Faculty Scholar Award to Wyndol Furman. Appreciation is expressed to Lawrence Epstein, Beverly Morris, Judy Pomeranz, and Ken Wyatt for their invaluable assistance. We also appreciate the cooperation of the Cherry Creek and Englewood School systems. Reprints of this article and copies of the measures can be obtained from Leslie Gavin, National Jewish Center for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine, K-802, 1400 Jackson Street, Denver, CO 80206 or Wyndol Furman, Department of Psychology, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208.

### 376 Child Development

acteristics, such as interests or perceived socioemotional needs. In the present study, we considered both individual characteristics of each partner and similarity of characteristics between partners in our examination of harmony in adolescents' relationships with peers and parents.

*Individual characteristics.*—Although few studies have specifically examined interpersonal harmony, many variables have been related to interpersonal attraction. For example, social skill has received considerable attention as an important variable in friendship formation and maintenance. Buhrmester (1990) found that social competence in peer relationships was associated with greater intimacy in friendships. To date, social skills have not been examined as extensively in parent-adolescent relationships, although clinical investigators have taught parents and adolescents communication skills as a way of improving their relationships (Robin & Foster, 1989). Other potentially important individual characteristics include emotional attunement, display of positive affect, high self-esteem, psychological mindedness, and ability to manage power and jealousy within the relationship.

*Similarity of partners' characteristics.*—Similarity of interests and similarity of attitudes are also major predictors of interpersonal attraction (see Hinde, 1979; Huston & Levinger, 1978). Children emphasize the importance of shared activities in their conceptions of friendship (Bigelow, 1977; Furman & Bierman, 1984), and in their reasons for liking friends (Rubin, 1980). Attitudes are more similar among adolescent friends than among those who are not friends, and friends' attitudes become more similar to one another over time (Kandel, 1978). Although similarity has been shown to be important in friendships, it has not been examined empirically in parent-adolescent relationships. Relationship harmony may also be related to the degree to which the two partners have similar socioemotional needs and the degree to which each partner perceives that their needs are being met in the relationship.

We believe that a common framework may be used to understand harmony or disharmony in relationships with both parents and friends. We generally expected the same factors to be associated with harmony in the two kinds of relationships, but some differences may occur. For example, similarity of interests may be more important in peer re-

lationships than in relationships with parents. Furthermore, it is important not to equate these relationships. For example, we expected relationship harmony to be related to how well the adolescents perceived their needs were met by each partner, although the specific needs could vary across parent and peer relationships.

#### *The Present Study*

In the present study, adolescent girls' relationships with their mothers and best friends were investigated. For both parent-adolescent and friendship pairs, relationship harmony was hypothesized to be related to (1) certain individual characteristics of each partner that lend themselves to maintaining harmonious relationships (i.e., positive social skills and prosocial interpersonal characteristics, ability to meet partners' needs) and (2) similarity of certain characteristics of the two people (i.e., similarity of interests and socioemotional needs).

### Method

#### *Subjects*

The participants were 60 adolescent girls, their mothers, and best female friends. The age range for the focal adolescents was 15–18 years (mean = 16.5), for friends was 12–18 (mean = 16.2), and for mothers was 34–58 (mean = 43.5). The sample comprised 57 Caucasian, one African-American, and two Hispanic females. The participants were primarily from middle-class urban and suburban families, with the mean family income being \$30,000–\$40,000 per year. Fifty-eight percent of the target adolescents' parents were married, 3% were separated, 37% were divorced, and 2% of the mothers were widowed.

#### *Procedure*

Questionnaires were administered to a large pool of subjects to identify adolescents with particularly harmonious or disharmonious relationships. The questionnaires were distributed through local school systems and through televised public service announcements. Approximately 450 interested adolescents completed a 16-item short version of the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), which assessed supportive and negative interactions with their mothers and their best female friends. The adolescent's perception of harmony was defined as the degree of perceived support minus the degree of perceived negative interaction in that relationship. Harmonious relationships were

considered to be those with scores at least one-half of a standard deviation above the mean, whereas disharmonious were those at least one-half of a standard deviation below the mean. Although the terms *harmonious* and *disharmonious* are used to describe these relationships, it should be noted that they are defined in terms of their relative degree of harmony and not in any absolute sense of harmony or disharmony.

Using these criteria, we identified equal numbers of adolescents who had relatively harmonious relationships with both partners, relatively disharmonious relationships with both, relatively harmonious relationships with mothers and relatively disharmonious relationships with friends, and vice versa. Thus, our screening procedure yielded a group of adolescents with diverse relational experiences with mothers and friends.

At the time of the actual study, the recruited adolescents again rated their relationships using the full version of the NRI, and final assignment to the four groups was done by median splits on these full harmony scale scores. In particular, the 60 adolescents were assigned to the following groups: (1) those with relatively harmonious relationships with both mothers and friends ( $N = 17$ ), (2) those with relatively disharmonious relationships with both ( $N = 16$ ), (3) those with relatively harmonious relationships with mothers and relatively disharmonious relationships with friends ( $N = 14$ ), and (4) vice versa ( $N = 13$ ).

During their visit to the laboratory, adolescents, parents, and friends all completed sets of questionnaires, and adolescent-mother and adolescent-friend dyads were observed interacting. Adolescents and their friends were each paid \$15.00. Mothers participated voluntarily.

#### Questionnaire Measures

*Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI).*—The NRI (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) was used to assess the adolescent's perceptions of supportive and negative interactions with mother and best friend. For example, subjects were asked, "How much does this person help you when you need to get something done?" Ratings were done on standard five-point Likert scales, and anchor points ranged from 1 (little or none) to 5 (the most). The NRI includes 10 three-item scales that load on two factors: (1) Support (affection, admiration, reliable alliance, intimacy, companionship, instrumental help,

and nurturance of the other) and (2) Negative Interactions (conflict, punishment, and irritation). Cronbach's alphas of the factors exceeded .90.

The NRI was used because it is one of the few validated measures available that poses parallel questions across relationships, thus providing comparable data. Additionally, the NRI also taps a total of 10 different supportive or negative features of relationships, permitting us to examine a relatively broad construct. The harmony scores used for assigning subjects to groups were calculated by subtracting standardized negative interaction scores from the standardized support scores.

The focal adolescents' and their partners' reports of harmony were highly related (adolescent-friend  $r = .55$ ; adolescent-mother  $r = .61$ ). We chose to use only the one rater, the focal adolescent, so that the rater was consistent across relationships.

*Activities and Interests Inventory.*—This questionnaire was used to assess the similarity of each set of partners' activities and interests. Each of the three participants was asked how much they enjoy a range of 66 activities, including various sports, artistic hobbies, and recreational and daily activities. The format for each item was a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (*extremely* much). The similarity between the adolescent's and partner's interests was determined by correlating the adolescent's ratings with those of each of her partners.

*Emotional Needs Inventory.*—The Emotional Needs Inventory comprised a list of 16 social and emotional needs derived from the work of Maslow (1954), Murray (1938), Sullivan (1953), and Weiss (1974). Initially, participants were asked to rate how important each need was within a particular relationship. Mothers rated the items in terms of their parent-adolescent relationship, best friends rated items in terms of their best friend relationship, and focal adolescents did both. Ratings for each item were done on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (*extremely* important). Having rated all the items, participants were asked to choose their three most important needs in a particular relationship and rate how well the partner met those needs. These latter ratings were used to assess need fulfillment, whereas an index of needs similarity was derived by correlating the two full sets of needs ratings.

### 378 Child Development

*Social skills.*—All participants were asked to rate how well their partners performed a series of 11 social skills. Some items were derived from the Perceived Interpersonal Competencies Inventory (PICI; Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988), and others were created specifically for this study. Mothers and friends rated their perceptions of the focal adolescent. The focal adolescent rated both the mother and the best friend. A five-point Likert scale (1 = poor to 5 = extremely good) was employed. The Cronbach's alpha for the mother, friend, and adolescent ratings ranged from .83 to .88.

#### *Observational Measures*

*Tasks.*—Adolescent-mother and adolescent-friend dyads were videotaped while participating in three 8-min interactions. Order of dyad was counterbalanced across subjects. In the first segment, the pair was asked to plan a week-long vacation. This task, developed by Grotevant and Cooper (1983), was used to elicit cooperation and fun in the relationship. In the second segment, each partner identified three problems in their relationship. They were then asked to agree upon and discuss the most severe problem, including why it was a problem, feelings about the problem, and possible solutions. This task is similar to conflict tasks used in previous studies of adolescents' family interactions (Hauser et al., 1984). The third segment was designed to examine parent and friend supportiveness. Specifically, dyads were asked to discuss a problem the adolescent was experiencing outside of the present relationship.

*Observational ratings.*—Each individual in each dyad was coded using the Interactional Q-sort. The Q-set consisted of 58 items which focused on (a) characteristics of the individual during the interaction (e.g., affect and mood) and (b) how the individual manages the relationship with the partner (e.g., social skills, ability to manage conflict, attunement). Raters sorted the items using a fixed seven-point distribution, with each pole representing items that are most characteristic of the individual being coded.

There were three raters, each with extensive clinical and coding experience. To avoid carry-over effects, a rater observed only one of the two sets of dyadic interactions for a particular focal adolescent. A subset of 24 sorts per pair of coders (48 total) was used to calculate interrater reliability. The interrater reliability was .75 (mean cor-

relation with Spearman-Brown correction for proportion with composite ratings).

A principal components analysis with an oblique rotation was performed on the 240 sorts. A nine-factor solution accounting for 51.2% of the variance was selected because it provided the most theoretically coherent results (see Table 1 for Q-sort items and factor loadings).

Factors are labeled as follows: Cooperative relationship characteristics (15 items, Cronbach's alpha = .92); Psychological Mindedness (five items, Cronbach's alpha = .78); Affect (seven items, Cronbach's alpha = .86); Self-Esteem (five items, Cronbach's alpha = .66); Self-Centeredness (four items, Cronbach's alpha = .60); Problem-Solving (three items, Cronbach's alpha = .73); Power (three items, Cronbach's alpha = .66); Attunement (seven items, Cronbach's alpha = .86); and Jealousy (three items, Cronbach's alpha = .52).

### Results

#### *Preliminary Analyses*

Measures of similarity of interests and needs were determined by calculating the correlations between the adolescent's and each partner's scores. Next, preliminary analyses were performed to investigate questions of discriminant validity among the self-report measures. These analyses revealed that the internal consistency of the different self-report measures (harmony, need fulfillment, and social skills) were higher than their intercorrelations with one exception. Reports of social skills were highly related to reports of need fulfillment (mean  $r = .71$ ). Other than this, the measures had satisfactory discriminant validity.

Next,  $2 \times 2$  MANOVAs (harmonious/disharmonious relationship with mother  $\times$  harmonious/disharmonious best friend relationship) were conducted on the set of scores for the mother-adolescent relationship and those for the adolescent-friend relationship. The MANOVA of the variables concerning the mother-adolescent relationship revealed a significant effect for harmony in the mother-adolescent relationship, Wilks's lambda = .23,  $p < .01$ , whereas the effects of harmony in the friendship and the interaction of harmony in the two relationships were not significant. Conversely, the MANOVA of the friendship variables yielded a significant effect for harmony in the friendship relationship, Wilks's lambda = .36,  $p < .05$ , whereas the effects of har-

TABLE 1  
Q-SORT FACTORS AND LOADINGS

Cooperation:	
Interacts smoothly .....	.78
Exits negative cycles .....	.73
Validates .....	.73
Not angry .....	.71
Sees other point of view .....	.66
Supportive .....	.64
Not aggressive .....	.62
Cooperative .....	.58
Trusts partner .....	.54
Not guilt inducing .....	.53
Responds to criticism .....	.49
Expresses negative affect .....	-.49
Takes turns .....	.35
Expresses specialness of dyad .....	.34
Acknowledges role .....	.32
Psychological mindedness:	
Self-observing .....	.71
Self-disclosing .....	.69
Deep, introspective .....	.68
Responds clearly .....	.44
Manages negative affect .....	.38
Affect:	
Animated .....	.81
Fun .....	.68
Humorous .....	.67
Happy .....	.61
Open body language .....	.51
Escalates positively .....	.46
Self-esteem:	
High self-esteem .....	.72
Relaxed .....	.48
Reflective .....	.46
Mature .....	.42
Offers help .....	.41
Self-centeredness:	
Appropriate attention to self .....	.66
Not center of attention .....	.47
Not over-dramatic .....	.40
Problem solving:	
Negotiates .....	.70
Problem solves .....	.68
Talks about problems .....	.48
Power:	
Self-assertive .....	-.78
Act as equal .....	-.59
Has equal power .....	-.45
Attunement:	
Nurturant .....	-.73
Acts interested .....	-.59
Warm .....	-.46
In tune with partner .....	-.46
Interested, not bored .....	-.44
Not sarcastic .....	-.40
Checks in with partner .....	-.39
Jealousy:	
Not rivalrous .....	-.52
Not jealous .....	-.50
Not possessive .....	-.32

mony in the mother-adolescent relationship and the interaction term were not significant. Two by two ANOVAs (harmonious/disharmonious relationship with mother  $\times$  harmonious/disharmonious best friend relationship) were then performed to determine the specific nature of the significant multivariate effects. The results of these analyses are presented in the following sections.

#### Interests and Activities

Table 2 depicts the mean scores of the four groups. As predicted, harmonious mother-daughter pairs displayed more similarity in interests than disharmonious ones,  $F(1, 59) = 6.34, p < .05$ . Not surprisingly, similarity between mother and adolescent in interests was not related to friendship harmony or the interaction between harmony in the two relationships.

Next,  $2 \times 2$  ANOVAs of the friend-adolescent similarity scores were conducted. Contrary to expectations, these analyses did not reveal any significant effects for the degree of harmony in friendships.

#### Emotional Needs

As expected, adolescents who had harmonious relationships with mothers reported that their most important needs were met better by their mothers than did those with disharmonious relationships,  $F(1, 58) = 29.55, p < .01$ . The mothers of these same adolescents also reported that their needs were fulfilled better,  $F(1, 59) = 19.48, p < .01$ . Similarly, adolescents who had harmonious friendships reported that their most important needs were better fulfilled by their friends than those with disharmonious friendships,  $F(1, 59) = 21.38, p < .01$ . Interestingly, for friends' reports of need fulfillment, the main effect of the adolescents' harmony with their friendships was not significant, but the main effect of harmony with relationships with their mothers was,  $F(1, 59) = 5.01, p < .05$ . Specifically, friends reported greater need fulfillment in relationships with adolescents who had harmonious relationships with their mothers. This latter finding should be interpreted cautiously as the corresponding effect was not significant in the initial MANOVA.

It was also hypothesized that partners in harmonious relationships would have more similar relationship needs than those in disharmonious relationships. As expected, adolescents and mothers with harmonious relationships had more similar needs than those in disharmonious relationships,  $F(1, 57) = 8.05, p < .01$ , and adolescents and friends

TABLE 2  
 MEAN SCORES (and Standard Deviations) ON INTERESTS, VALUES, NEEDS, AND SOCIAL SKILLS SELF-REPORT MEASURES

Variables	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Significant Effects
	Harmony Mother Friend	Harmony Mother Friend	Disharmony Friend	Harmony Mother Friend	Disharmony Friend	Disharmony Friend	Disharmony Friend	Disharmony Friend	
Correlation of interests:									
Mother and teen	.33 (.17)		.39 (.20)		.21 (.15)		.20 (.14)		Harmony with mother**
Friend and teen	.49 (.12)		.48 (.10)		.44 (.14)		.47 (.14)		N.S.
Need fulfillment within relationship:									
Teen with mother	4.29 (.53)		4.19 (.61)		2.90 (1.08)		3.06 (1.19)		Harmony with mother**
Teen with friend	4.47 (.44)		3.60 (.81)		3.42 (.90)		4.26 (.64)		Harmony with friend**
Mother with teen	3.94 (.67)		3.83 (.86)		2.98 (.75)		2.97 (.92)		Harmony with mother**
Correlation of needs:									
Mother and teen	.54 (.21)		.47 (.21)		.38 (.19)		.39 (.28)		Harmony with mother**
Friend and teen	.50 (.25)		.19 (.35)		.32 (.36)		.44 (.24)		Harmony with friend**
Reported social skills:									
Mother of teen	3.83 (.49)		3.44 (.51)		3.28 (.72)		3.06 (.60)		Harmony with mother**
Friend of teen	4.16 (.44)		3.92 (.63)		3.86 (.68)		3.76 (.44)		N.S.
Teen of mother	3.92 (.46)		3.88 (.52)		2.77 (.77)		3.08 (.72)		Harmony with mother**
Teen of friend	4.03 (.45)		3.46 (.62)		3.40 (.59)		3.93 (.35)		Harmony with friend**

NOTE.—The nature of the significant interactions are described in the text.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

with harmonious relationships had more similar needs than those in disharmonious friendships,  $F(1, 59) = 7.05, p < .01$ .

#### *Reported Social Skills*

As reported in Table 2, adolescents who reported harmonious relationships with their mothers were rated as more socially skilled by their mothers and in turn rated their mothers as more socially skilled,  $F(1, 59) = 9.02, p < .01, F(1, 59) = 35.99, p < .01$ . Similarly, adolescents who had harmonious friendships rated their friends as more socially skillful,  $F(1, 59) = 17.18, p < .01$ . Friends' ratings of the adolescent's social skill did not differ as a function of the harmony ratings.

#### *Observational Ratings of Interpersonal Characteristics*

As described in the "Methods" section, the 58 Q-sort items were subjected to a principal components analysis. Using the nine factors that emerged from this analysis,  $2 \times 2$  ANOVAs were carried out for each factor to determine whether certain interpersonal characteristics differed as a function of the adolescent's reports of relationship harmony with mother and friend (see Table 3). Analyses of the ratings of interactions with mothers revealed that adolescents with more harmonious relationships with mothers displayed more cooperative relationship skills,  $F(1, 59) = 17.37, p < .01$ , more positive affect,  $F(1, 59) = 7.81, p < .01$ , more attunement to mother,  $F(1, 59) = 9.58, p < .01$ , and better ability to negotiate power,  $F(1, 59) = 4.04, p < .05$ .

Similarly, mothers who had harmonious relationships with their adolescents received higher ratings on the following variables: cooperative relationship skills,  $F(1, 59) = 7.61, p < .01$ , display of positive affect,  $F(1, 59) = 4.10, p < .05$ , ability to problem solve,  $F(1, 59) = 4.95, p < .05$ , ability to negotiate power with daughter,  $F(1, 59) = 4.88, p < .05$ , and attunement with daughter,  $F(1, 59) = 7.43, p < .01$ . Analyses of the interactions with friends revealed that adolescents with harmonious friendships displayed more positive affect,  $F(1, 59) = 7.37, p < .01$ , better ability to share power in the relationship,  $F(1, 59) = 7.37, p < .01$ , and less jealousy,  $F(1, 59) = 7.25, p < .01$ . The main effect for the adolescent's display of positive affect, however, was moderated by a significant interaction between harmony with friend and harmony with mother,  $F(1, 59) = 5.62, p < .05$ . Newman-Keuls tests indicated that adolescents perceiving harmony

in both relationships displayed more positive affect than adolescents with disharmonious relationships with mothers and disharmonious friendships; scores for the other two cells fell in between. The main effect for jealousy was also moderated by a similar interaction effect,  $F(1, 59) = 5.75, p < .05$ . Again, adolescents who were satisfied with both relationships displayed less jealousy with their friends than girls with harmonious relationships with mothers and disharmonious relationships with friends.

Analyses of friends' interpersonal characteristics as displayed with the focal adolescents revealed the following. Compared to those in disharmonious friendships, friends in harmonious relationships had higher ratings on cooperative social skills,  $F(1, 59) = 7.29, p < .01$ , display of positive affect,  $F(1, 59) = 4.18, p < .05$ , ability to not be self-centered,  $F(1, 59) = 7.25, p < .01$ , ability to negotiate power in the relationship,  $F(1, 59) = 6.53, p < .01$ , attunement,  $F(1, 59) = 6.22, p < .05$ , and lack of jealousy,  $F(1, 59) = 5.04, p < .05$ . The main effect for lack of jealousy was moderated, however, by an interaction effect,  $F(1, 59) = 5.28, p < .05$ . Follow-up tests indicated that girls with harmonious relationships with mothers and friends had friends who were significantly less jealous than girls with harmonious relationships with mothers and disharmonious ones with friends; scores for the other two cells fell in between. Once again, this interaction and those described in the preceding paragraph should be interpreted cautiously as the interaction effect was not significant in the MANOVA.

## **Discussion**

Much of the literature on adolescent relationships has focused on understanding normative developmental changes in adolescents' relationships with parents and friends. In contrast, the present study examined individual differences in these relationships. In particular, we tried to determine whether a common framework of variables could be used to understand variations in the degree of harmony in adolescents' relationships with mothers and best friends. We found that both individual characteristics and the match of individual characteristics were important correlates of relationship harmony. Our findings are strengthened by our reliance on multiple methods and multiple agents, as the inclusion of observational techniques helps rule out the possibility of shared method variance accounting for all

TABLE 3  
 MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF FOUR GROUPS ON OBSERVATIONAL Q-SORT VARIABLES

Variables	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Significant Effects
	Harmony Mother Harmony Friend	Harmony Mother Disharmony Friend	Harmony Mother Harmony Friend	Disharmony Mother Disharmony Friend	Harmony Mother Harmony Friend	Disharmony Mother Disharmony Friend	Harmony Mother Harmony Friend	Disharmony Mother Harmony Friend	
Teen with mother:									
Cooperation .....	4.16 (1.18)	4.39 (1.10)	4.39 (1.10)	4.39 (1.10)	3.50 (.81)	3.50 (.81)	2.84 (.94)	2.84 (.94)	Harmony with mother**
Psychological mindedness .....	3.68 (1.33)	4.27 (1.55)	4.27 (1.55)	4.27 (1.55)	3.68 (1.36)	3.68 (1.36)	3.73 (1.02)	3.73 (1.02)	
Affect .....	4.07 (1.09)	3.88 (1.16)	3.88 (1.16)	3.88 (1.16)	3.16 (.88)	3.16 (.88)	3.32 (.89)	3.32 (.89)	Harmony with mother**
Self-esteem .....	3.62 (1.12)	4.08 (1.14)	4.08 (1.14)	4.08 (1.14)	3.39 (.75)	3.39 (.75)	3.44 (.88)	3.44 (.88)	
Self-centeredness .....	5.04 (1.02)	4.82 (1.38)	4.82 (1.38)	4.82 (1.38)	4.64 (.90)	4.64 (.90)	4.78 (1.07)	4.78 (1.07)	
Problem solving .....	3.23 (1.13)	4.09 (1.24)	4.09 (1.24)	4.09 (1.24)	3.47 (1.34)	3.47 (1.34)	3.24 (.78)	3.24 (.78)	
Power .....	4.77 (1.11)	4.80 (1.02)	4.80 (1.02)	4.80 (1.02)	4.36 (1.03)	4.36 (1.03)	4.09 (1.14)	4.09 (1.14)	Harmony with mother*
Attunement .....	4.42 (1.18)	4.33 (1.03)	4.33 (1.03)	4.33 (1.03)	3.69 (1.0)	3.69 (1.0)	3.41 (.79)	3.41 (.79)	Harmony with mother**
Jealousy .....	4.50 (.39)	4.19 (.60)	4.19 (.60)	4.19 (.60)	4.28 (.39)	4.28 (.39)	4.18 (.75)	4.18 (.75)	
Mother with teen:									
Cooperation .....	4.19 (1.15)	4.43 (.99)	4.43 (.99)	4.43 (.99)	3.40 (.83)	3.40 (.83)	3.69 (1.25)	3.69 (1.25)	Harmony with mother*
Psychological mindedness .....	3.83 (1.27)	3.85 (1.00)	3.85 (1.00)	3.85 (1.00)	3.34 (.81)	3.34 (.81)	3.37 (1.13)	3.37 (1.13)	
Affect .....	4.14 (1.07)	4.24 (1.10)	4.24 (1.10)	4.24 (1.10)	3.41 (1.15)	3.41 (1.15)	3.83 (1.04)	3.83 (1.04)	Harmony with mother*
Self-esteem .....	4.83 (.69)	4.44 (.92)	4.44 (.92)	4.44 (.92)	4.36 (.88)	4.36 (.88)	4.50 (.99)	4.50 (.99)	
Self-centeredness .....	4.83 (.96)	4.64 (1.06)	4.64 (1.06)	4.64 (1.06)	4.23 (1.23)	4.23 (1.23)	4.52 (1.11)	4.52 (1.11)	
Problem solving .....	3.97 (1.02)	4.55 (1.30)	4.55 (1.30)	4.55 (1.30)	3.64 (1.20)	3.64 (1.20)	3.53 (1.18)	3.53 (1.18)	Harmony with mother*
Power .....	4.62 (1.09)	4.55 (1.13)	4.55 (1.13)	4.55 (1.13)	4.17 (1.24)	4.17 (1.24)	3.69 (1.05)	3.69 (1.05)	Harmony with mother*
Attunement .....	4.79 (1.12)	4.48 (1.52)	4.48 (1.52)	4.48 (1.52)	3.53 (1.32)	3.53 (1.32)	3.97 (.98)	3.97 (.98)	Harmony with mother**
Jealousy .....	3.93 (.65)	3.98 (.97)	3.98 (.97)	3.98 (.97)	4.01 (.66)	4.01 (.66)	3.91 (.91)	3.91 (.91)	



<b>Teen with friend:</b>					
Cooperation .....	4.77 (.86)	4.15 (1.12)	4.04 (1.09)	4.36 (.71)	
Psychological mindedness .....	3.94 (1.29)	3.93 (1.58)	4.03 (1.33)	3.94 (1.40)	
Affect .....	4.90 (.90)	3.60 (.90)	4.20 (1.09)	4.27 (1.13)	Friendship harmony,** interaction*
Self-esteem .....	4.05 (.91)	3.32 (.89)	3.40 (1.07)	3.37 (1.15)	
Self-centeredness .....	4.89 (1.25)	4.73 (1.12)	4.49 (1.10)	4.60 (.92)	
Problem solving .....	3.37 (1.00)	3.72 (1.34)	4.03 (.95)	3.43 (1.47)	Friendship harmony,**
Power .....	4.77 (1.16)	4.24 (.67)	4.35 (1.12)	5.35 (.69)	
Attunement .....	4.42 (1.04)	3.86 (.84)	4.25 (.99)	4.04 (1.29)	Friendship harmony,** interaction
Jealousy .....	4.26 (.71)	3.18 (1.10)	3.69 (.90)	3.73 (.53)	
<b>Friend with teen:</b>					
Cooperation .....	4.51 (.97)	3.74 (.77)	4.05 (.79)	4.48 (.87)	Friendship harmony**
Psychological mindedness .....	3.48 (1.20)	3.39 (1.23)	3.15 (.92)	3.34 (.92)	
Affect .....	4.84 (1.09)	3.94 (.97)	4.44 (1.16)	4.64 (.98)	Friendship harmony*
Self-esteem .....	4.01 (.82)	3.88 (.72)	3.60 (.89)	3.83 (.88)	
Self-centeredness .....	4.71 (1.21)	4.42 (1.19)	3.93 (1.20)	3.89 (.77)	Friendship harmony*
Problem solving .....	3.39 (.79)	3.84 (1.35)	3.69 (1.14)	3.70 (1.45)	
Power .....	4.60 (1.12)	3.87 (1.02)	4.54 (1.01)	5.09 (.61)	Friendship harmony**
Attunement .....	4.39 (1.22)	3.50 (1.03)	3.69 (1.08)	4.26 (1.22)	Friendship harmony** interaction*
Jealousy .....	4.33 (1.07)	3.32 (.67)	3.90 (.93)	3.87 (.80)	

NOTE.—The nature of the significant interactions are described in the text.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

### 384 Child Development

associations. Moreover, many of the significant questionnaire results were based on correlations of the adolescent's and her partners' responses, and thus were multimethod in themselves.

The common framework helped identify similarities and differences in predictors of harmony across mother-adolescent and friendship relationships. Harmony in both relationships was predicted by partners' perceptions that the other person was meeting their socioemotional needs, and by the degree of similarity of their needs. Regarding observed interactional characteristics, harmony in both relationships was related to partners displaying positive affect and attunement, and being able to share power appropriately. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the present study, the causal directions of these and other relations remain unclear. For example, need fulfillment may facilitate harmony and/or vice versa.

Although much of the literature on adolescence emphasizes differences between parent and peer relationships, the present results offer a contribution to the literature by demonstrating that many of the findings are not specific to one particular relationship. In fact, we suggest that explanations of these findings should not be based on the special properties of one particular kind of relationship but, instead, should be based on the common processes underlying friendships, mother-adolescent relationships, and perhaps other close relationships. For example, one could argue that positive affect is associated with friendship harmony because positive affective exchanges foster close ties between equals. However, the fact that positive affect was also related to harmony in mother-adolescent relationships indicates that such positive affective exchanges play a critical role in asymmetrical (parental) as well as egalitarian (friendship) relationships. In fact, expression of positive affect may be a fundamental correlate of harmony across many different kinds of relationships.

Although some of the processes within these two relationships are similar, the variables may not be operationalized in the same way in asymmetrical versus egalitarian relationships. For example, although power management is important in both, one would expect friends to treat each other as equals, whereas equality of power between parent and adolescent is probably not expected by either partner. Instead, it may be the parent's ability to negotiate with the adolescent

and remain in authority while giving the adolescent an increasing amount of autonomy and control that is most important. Differentiating the exact nature of these distinctions requires further exploration.

Moreover, it is also important to emphasize that some results were different for the two relationships. Unlike harmonious mother-daughter relationships, harmonious friendships did not have higher levels of common interests and activities. These results may reflect the fact that all best friends have common interests by virtue of being adolescents and having chosen each other as friends (Ball, 1981; Kandel, 1978). In fact, the degree of similarity in interests in all four groups of adolescents tended to be rather high (adolescent-friend interests, mean  $r = .47$ ) and are higher than the reports of similarity in interests of mother and daughter (mean  $r = .26$ ).

Differences also occurred in the links between harmony and social skills in the two relationships. Both the mother's and daughter's ability to use cooperative social skills with one another were related to perceived relationship harmony. This result was a robust one, being found in both the self-report and the observational data. The social skills data within the friendship relationship were less consistent. In the self-report data, the adolescent's report of the friends' social skills differentiated harmonious and disharmonious dyads, but the friend's report of the adolescent's skills did not. In the observational data, ratings of the friends' cooperative social skills differentiated harmonious and disharmonious dyads, but ratings of the focal adolescents did not. Although this inconsistency could indicate that social skills are less important within the friendship domain, this explanation is implausible in light of other research (Asher & Renshaw, 1981; Buhrmester, 1990). It may be that social skill and friendship harmony are not related in a linear fashion; instead, it may only be important to have some minimal level of social skill in order to have relatively harmonious friendships.

Alternatively, the social skills important in an adolescent friendship may not be readily perceived by an outside observer or may not have been tapped in the structured interactions employed in this study. Informal observations made during the study suggested that adolescent girls' overt behaviors and how they behaved socially were not always concordant with their reports of har-

mony in the friendship. There appeared to be some pressures within the friendship interactions to "be nice" and not confront conflict directly, whereas in the mother-daughter interactions, conflict was discussed openly. Whether or not the adolescents were consciously aware of any difficulties in their friendships, or whether they intentionally disguised difficulties is an interesting question for interactional researchers that deserves further investigation.

Finally, several observational variables were only associated with reports of harmony in one of the two relationships. For example, problem-solving ability was related to relationship harmony with mother, but not friends. Compared to peer dyads, mothers and daughters are likely to have more experience and spend more energy discussing problems and working out day-to-day hassles, perhaps making it a more important skill within this domain. In contrast, the management of jealousy was not related to harmony within the mother-daughter relationship, but it was in the adolescent friendship. Girls who saw both relationships as harmonious were significantly less jealous and had friends who displayed less jealousy than girls who only saw their relationships with their mothers to be harmonious. These latter girls may be less secure socially, perhaps because they are more identified with adults than with peers. The fact that this group of girls was also the least able to display positive affect and have fun with friends may reflect a pseudo-adult quality that may be less attractive to peers.

More generally, fewer variables were significantly related to perceptions of friendship harmony than to perceptions of mother-daughter harmony. This difference was particularly true for the measures completed by the friend and mother. Perhaps mothers are more accurate or insightful reporters because they have known their daughters longer and more intimately. In addition, friends may show a positivity bias. Girls may be less likely to talk about the negative aspects of their relationships, due to discomfort about conflict or a desire to avoid awkwardness.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

First, one must use caution in generalizing from this sample of 60 primarily Caucasian, middle-class, adolescent girls and their mothers. Similarly, the sample contained few, if any, relationships that could be characterized as disturbed in a clinical sense, al-

though our recruiting strategy was designed to include a wide range of relationships within a nonclinical sample. Third, the work is cross-sectional, thereby preventing us from specifying the direction of effects between perceptions of harmony and the various factors examined. Longitudinal work would also help us understand the nature of the links between parent-child relationships and peer relationships. One should also not misinterpret the absence of cross-relationship effects (e.g., the lack of differences in the friendships of harmonious and disharmonious mother-daughter dyads). The inclusion of a relatively equal number of adolescents in the four cells has the statistical effect of essentially eliminating any relation between harmony in mother-daughter dyads and harmony in friendships.

One interesting aspect of this study is the inclusion of girls with relatively disharmonious best friendships. Although it was beyond the scope of the present study to investigate this group in depth, it represents an interesting subpopulation of girls who choose to remain in what they acknowledge are relatively conflictual, unsupportive best friendships. It would be interesting to study girls with this pattern of peer relationships more closely.

These limitations notwithstanding, present results underscore the importance of looking at relationships in the broad social context and with multiple methods. It is our hope that the framework presented in this study will extend the current literature on adolescent relationships by providing one way to understand harmony in a range of different relationships.

#### **References**

- Asher, S. R., & Renshaw, P. D. (1981). Children without friends: Social knowledge and social skill training. In S. R. Asher & J. M. Gottman (Eds.), *The development of children's friendships* (pp. 273-296). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ball, S. J. (1981). *Beachside comprehensive*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bigelow, B. J. (1977). Children's friendship expectations: A cognitive developmental study. *Child Development*, *48*, 246-253.
- Buhrmester, D. (1990). Intimacy of friendship, interpersonal competence, and adjustment during preadolescence and adolescence. *Child Development*, *61*, 1101-1111.
- Buhrmester, D., Furman, W., Wittenberg, M., &

### 386 Child Development

- Reis, H. (1988). Five domains of interpersonal competence in peer relations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*, 991-1008.
- Furman, W. (1984). Issues in the assessment of social skills of normal and handicapped children. In T. Field, M. Siegal, & J. Roopnarine (Eds.), *Friendships of normal and handicapped children* (pp. 3-30). New York: Ablex.
- Furman, W. (1987). *Social support, stress, and adjustment in adolescence*. Paper presented at the Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore.
- Furman, W., & Bierman, K. L. (1984). Children's conceptions of friendship: A multimethod study of developmental changes. *Developmental Psychology*, *20*, 925-933.
- Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children's perceptions of the personal relationship in their social networks. *Developmental Psychology*, *21*, 1016-1024.
- Gold, M., & Yanof, D. S. (1985). Mothers, daughters, and girlfriends. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *49*, 654-659.
- Grotevant, H. D., & Cooper, C. R. (1983). *New directions for child development: Adolescent development in the family*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hauser, S. T., Powers, S. I., Noam, F. F., Jacobson, A., Weiss, B., & Follansbee, D. J. (1984). Familial context of adolescent ego development. *Child Development*, *55*, 195-213.
- Hinde, R. A. (1979). *Towards understanding relationships*. New York: Academic.
- Huston, T. L., & Levinger, G. (1978). Interpersonal attraction and relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *29*, 115-156.
- Kandel, D. (1978). Similarity in real-life adolescent friendship pairs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*, 306-312.
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper.
- Murray, H. A. (1938). *Explorations in personality*. New York: Oxford.
- Robin, A. L., & Foster, S. L. (1989). *Negotiating parent-adolescent conflict*. New York: Guilford.
- Rubin, Z. (1980). *Children's friendships*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Savin-Williams, R. C., & Berndt, T. J. (1990). Friendship and relationships. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 277-307). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Steinberg, L. (1990). Autonomy, conflict and harmony in the family relationship. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 255-276). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- Weiss, R. (1974). The provisions of social relationships. In Z. Rubin (Ed.), *Doing unto others*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This document is a scanned copy of a printed document. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material.