



Linkages among adolescent girls' romantic relationships, best friendships, and peer networks

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Abstract

This study examined the linkages among girls' best friendships and romantic relationships and accounted for the level of dating involvement as a moderating variable. Social exchange and Sullivan's socioemotional theories served as guides in this process. Questionnaires were administered to 446 girls aged 15–19 years. Results showed that: (a) dating is associated with more positive and less negative interactions with best friends; (b) increasing age and dating involvement are linked with increased reliance on romantic partners; (c) romantic relationships have more negative interactions than best friendships; and (d) peer-network size and structure is related to dating behaviour. Mid to late adolescence is a time when girls shift attention away from friends and towards romantic partners.

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Introduction

The formation of close friendships and romantic relationships is an important social developmental task for adolescents. As children mature into adolescents, time spent with opposite-sex peers increases (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991). By mid- to late adolescence, this increased heterosexual interaction begins to take the form of pursuing romantic interests and developing romantic relationships (Hansen, Christopher, & Nangle, 1992). Not surprisingly, the proportion of adolescents who report having a boyfriend or girlfriend also increases during this time. In one study, the percentage of adolescents having a boyfriend or girlfriend increased from 34.3% in 7th grade to 58.6% in 10th and 11th grade and 72% in 12th grade (Laursen & Williams, 1997).

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Recent research into the significance of romantic relationships indicates that the development of such relationships is important to adolescent functioning. For example, adolescent involvement in romantic relationships has been associated with greater levels of depressive symptoms (Joyner & Udry, 2000). Break-ups, in particular, appear to be an important predictive factor in elevated symptoms of depression (Joyner & Udry, 2000). On the other hand, romantic involvement has been linked to feelings of self-worth (Connolly & Konarski, 1994). Others have noted that romantic involvement is central to adolescents' connection with peers in terms of sense of belonging and status in the group (Collins, 2003).

Despite this, very little empirical data have examined how adolescents' dating relationships are related to their friendships and broader peer relationships. Yet, the identification of important factors in the transition from friends to romantic partners as primary sources of intimacy, support, affection, and companionship will lead to a better understanding of the process by which this occurs, and may help identify adolescents at risk for making poor adjustments during this transition period. Thus, the present study examined how romantic relationships is linked to adolescents' best friendships and larger peer networks.

Adolescent girls were the focus of the present study. Girls show interest in opposite-sex relationships at an earlier age than boys (Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981) and report more opposite-sex friends than boys (Blyth, Hill, & Thiel, 1982). Adolescent girls also rate their same-sex friendships higher on many friendship qualities (e.g. affection, companionship, intimacy) than boys (Clark-Lempers et al. (1991)) and are more integrated into social networks (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson & Halliday-Scher, 1995). Therefore, girls are likely faced with transition at an earlier age than boys and may encounter more difficulties shifting from friends to romantic partners because of the intensity of their relationships.

Best friendship quality and current dating involvement

The first goal of this study was to examine how dating *involvement* (not dating, casually dating, seriously dating) is related to closeness in adolescent girls' same-sex best friendships. To examine this, several key aspects of positive (i.e. companionship, support, reliable alliance, and affection) and negative (i.e. conflict, pressure) interactions with best friends were studied (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The degree to which adolescent girls experienced each of these attributes in their relationships was considered to be indicative of "relationship quality". Social exchange theory (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978) and Sullivan's (1953) socioemotional theory guided the hypotheses.

Social exchange theory posits that individuals develop and maintain relationships that maximize rewards and minimize costs (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Following this, some theorists suggest that increased time spent with opposite-sex peers comes at a cost to adolescents' relationships with same-sex peers (Rusbult, 1983), as fewer resources are left to invest in same-sex friendships. Consistent with this, Feiring (1996) found that adolescents view time commitment as a disadvantage of having a romantic partner. Furthermore, Hendrick and Hendrick (1993) argued that involvement with a romantic partner may be a source of strain in the friendships of adolescents. Girls, in particular, may become jealous when competition for time with close friends becomes too strong (Roth & Parker, 2001) because girls' friendships are more intimate and exclusive than boys' (Thorne, 1986). Thus, social exchange theory would predict negative

consequences of dating on friendships (Rusbult, 1983). That is, adolescents will see a “cost” associated with dating, specifically having less positive and more negative interactions with friends than non-daters.

In contrast, Sullivan (1953) proposed that skills learned through same-sex friendships during childhood serve as the basis for forming mutually rewarding relationships later in life. Through close friendships, youngsters learn intimacy, trust, empathy, and compassion (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986) as well as conflict resolution, negotiation, and compromise (Laursen, 1993). Sullivan’s theory, therefore, predicts that youngsters who have developed social competencies through close friendships are able to become close to both same- and opposite-sex peers (Howes, 1988). This theory supports research findings failing to find a trade-off between same- and opposite-sex relationships (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). For example, Connolly and Johnson (1996) found that having a romantic partner was not related to perceived social support from best friends. Similarly, another study found that adolescents’ romantic relationships did not affect close family and peer relationships (Laursen & Williams, 1997). Given that socially skilled adolescents are more likely to be involved in romantic relationships (Neemann, Hubbard, & Masten, 1995), Sullivan’s theory would predict that daters would have more positive interactions (e.g. more companionship, support, affection, etc.) with best friends than non-daters. In contrast, negative interactions (e.g. conflict and pressure) would be higher among non-daters, as they are less likely to have advanced compromise and conflict resolution skills compared to their dating counterparts.

The relative significance of romantic relationships, however, may be largely determined by the level of *involvement* in the relationship, a factor that has been largely ignored in studies of adolescent dating. Accounting for this may explain why some studies have found romantic partners to interfere with close friendships and others have not. Furthermore, few studies have examined how romantic involvement might relate to adolescents’ interactions with best friends. One study of young adults found that intimate involvement with friends decreased as commitment to romantic relationships increased (Johnson & Leslie, 1982). Hendrick and Hendrick (1993) have argued that as dating relationships become more serious and romantic partners become more primary in the lives of adolescents, romantic partners may begin to take over the role of “best friend”.

Following this line of reasoning, as daters begin to date exclusively, fewer resources may be available to dedicate to their best friendships. Hence, potential “trade-offs” associated with dating involvement may only be witnessed for adolescents who are seriously involved in romantic relationships versus those who are only casually dating or not dating at all. Social exchange theory assumes that individuals have a finite amount of time to allocate among their relationships. Although this theory suggests that increased investment in romantic relationships would decrease positive interactions with best friends, time commitment has been the only cited “cost” of dating involvement in previous research (e.g. Feiring, 1996). As a result, it was hypothesized that, in general, daters’ and non-daters’ best friendships would be of similar quality; that is, daters and non-daters would report similar levels of support, disclosure, affection, etc. in their friendships. However, *serious* daters were expected to have less companionship with best friends; also negative interactions between best friends was expected to be lower among daters, as they may be more socially savvy than their non-dating peers.

Potential age differences in adolescent girls’ friendships and romantic relationships were also considered. Friends play an increasingly important role during the period from childhood to

adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). However, as the likelihood of having a romantic partner increases during this time (Laursen & Williams, 1997), age-related shifts in the roles of best friends are also likely to occur. Research suggests that there is a shift between the ages 15 and 17 in several aspects of romantic relationships (Collins, 2003), with longer-term relationships becoming more common (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003). In addition, since romantic encounters are often made within the peer group (Brown, 1999), their effects on friendships can be observed. In fact, adolescent girls often feel excluded when their other friends begin to date (Roth & Parker, 2001). Thus, the present study explored the effects of age and dating involvement in the quality of girls' best friendships. The effects of age were examined by comparing mid- (15 and 16 year olds) and late- (17–19 year olds) adolescent girls.

Relationship qualities of best friends and romantic partners

The second study goal was to examine the relationship qualities of best friends and romantic partners as a function of dating involvement. Affiliative needs such as companionship, intimacy, and mutuality have been cited as the most important aspects of relationships (Feiring, 1996) and have been used to describe both friendships and romantic relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Based on this, the same relationship qualities were considered to be central in girls' best friendships and romantic relationships (i.e. companionship, affection, support, reliable alliance, conflict, and pressure). Sullivan's theory and social exchange theory were again used to guide hypotheses.

According to Sullivan (1953) and neo-Sullivanians (e.g. Buhrmester & Furman, 1986), people have a number of different social needs that are met by various individuals in their social network. Although social exchange theory also assumes that friendships are sought for specific rewards (e.g. companionship), romantic relationships are viewed as unique from other relationships in that they focus on maximizing the rewards of the relationship rather than the individual. As a result, proponents of social exchange theory argue that individuals rely on romantic partners for all needs, whereas other relationships are sought out for specific needs (Laursen & Williams, 1997). In general, social exchange theory anticipates that daters rely on romantic partners for all affiliative needs, whereas Sullivan would anticipate reliance on best friends for some needs and romantic partners for others.

Both Sullivan and recent adaptations of social exchange theory (Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 1999) acknowledge that the importance of different relationships changes with age and maturity. Both theories predict a shift in attention from friends to romantic partners with age. Studies show that, until young adulthood, romantic partners move up and parents move down in rank as providers of support (e.g. Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Thus, it was hypothesized that older adolescent girls would rely on romantic partners as much as or more than best friends for positive interactions, while younger adolescent girls would rely more on best friends than romantic partners for positive interactions.

Although recent studies have accounted for age-related changes in adolescents' interactions with friends and romantic partners, few if any studies have examined how increased dating involvement may alter patterns of interaction. However, dating involvement might be one important factor that facilitates the shift from reliance on friends to romantic partners. Connolly and Johnson (1996) found that adolescents in short-lived romantic relationships reported more

support from their best friend than their romantic partner, but adolescents in romantic relationships of long duration reported more support from their romantic partners than their best friends. In addition, interdependence is thought to gradually increase with increasing commitment in romantic relationships (Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 1999). As a result, it was hypothesized that the level of dating involvement (i.e. casual, serious) would moderate girls' reliance on best friends versus romantic partners. Specifically, girls involved in serious romantic relationships were expected to experience more positive interactions with romantic partners than best friends, whereas casual daters were expected to experience more with best friends.

Regarding negative interactions, research has shown that close friends avoid negative interactions and minimize the negative effect of conflict. Specifically, Laursen (1993) found that disagreements had no impact on or improved close friendship and romantic relationships. However, romantic partners, compared to friends, reported fewer conflict management techniques (Laursen, 1993), indicating that negative interactions may be more frequent in romantic relationships. Therefore, negative interactions (i.e. conflict, pressure) were expected to be higher in romantic relationships than best friendships. Age and level of dating involvement were also examined as moderating factors.

Peer group structure and usual dating involvement

The third study goal was to examine how peer-network structure and size relates to adolescents' dating involvement. Peer groups play a significant role in the initiation, frequency, and intensity of romantic relationships in adolescence (Furman, 1989). During childhood and early adolescence, same-sex cliques dominate the social domain (Crockett, Losoff, & Peterson, 1984). By middle adolescence, same-sex cliques transition to heterosexual crowds when high status members begin to date (Furman, 1989). The changing structure of the peer group, from same-sex to increasingly heterosexual networks, facilitates the emergence of romantic relationships during adolescence (Connolly & Konarski, 1994). As adolescents' interest in dating increases, the formation of opposite-sex cliques becomes more likely (Ingersoll, 1989). By late adolescence, the crowd involves several heterosexual cliques and, at this stage, clique membership becomes, to a large extent, based on patterns of heterosexual interaction.

Social exchange theory proposes that external influences, including the peer group, are important for providing a safe environment for the exploration of dating behaviours. Similarly, Sullivanian theory highlights the importance of peer group interactions for developing perspective-taking skills, empathy, and altruism (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986). Consistent with both perspectives, adolescent girls, in particular, have been shown to utilize cliques as a context for discussion about romance (Simon, Eder, & Evans, 1992). However, the peer group can also be a source of pressure to conform to expectations regarding romantic relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). Girls more than boys may be influenced by the dating behaviours of peers, as has been shown for sexual behaviour (Miller, Christopherson, & King, 1993). However, few studies have systematically examined the relationship between the peer-network and adolescents' dating patterns, and neither theory elaborates on the importance of peers in dating.

One study found that adolescents involved in romantic relationships had more opposite-sex friends than adolescents who did not date (Connolly & Johnson, 1996). This is consistent with the merging of male and female cliques that has been described during this time (Ingersoll, 1989).

Thus, in the present study, we expected that peer group structure would be related to adolescent girls' *usual* dating involvement because peer groups tend to be formed among individuals with similar interests, values, and social maturity (Douvan & Adelson, 1966). Specifically, it was hypothesized that girls who usually date (casually or seriously) would have more opposite-sex friends and friends who date than girls who usually do not date. *Usual* dating involvement was used instead of *current* dating involvement because casual daters may or may not be currently dating at the time of data collection, and choice of friends and peer groups are likely to be a function of adolescents' more stable attitudes and behaviours towards opposite-sex peers.

In addition, peer-network size was expected to vary according to adolescents' usual dating involvement. Connolly and Johnson (1996) found that adolescent daters have larger peer networks than non-daters. As more time is spent with romantic partners, however, less time might be available to maintain contacts within their social network. Thus, peer-network size was examined according to girls' usual dating involvement. Casual daters were expected to have larger peer networks than those who never dated, rarely date, or seriously date because they may be more likely to be involved in heterosocial crowds, which can increase the size of the peer network.

The current study

This study examined linkages among adolescents' dating relationships, best friendships, and peer networks. Several questions were investigated: (1) Is dating involvement related to the positive and negative interactions in adolescent girls' best friendships and is this moderated by their age? (2) Do the positive and negative interactions adolescent girls have with best friends and romantic partners differ, and is this moderated by their age and level of dating involvement? (3) Does the structure and size of the peer network relate to adolescent girls' dating involvement?

Although not a main focus, ethnic differences were also explored, as the study was conducted in South Florida, which has a large Hispanic/Latino population. There is a paucity of research on the dating behaviours of Hispanic youth. Research has shown that Hispanic youth are at greater risk for teen pregnancy than White youth (Torres & Singh, 1986). In addition, Hispanic females may have more conservative attitudes about sexual behaviour and may be less knowledgeable about sex than Whites and Blacks (DuRant, Seymore, Pendergrast, & Beckman, 1990). Because dating is the most socially acceptable means for exploring sexuality (Ingersoll, 1989), ethnic differences in the quality of adolescent dating relationships were explored by evaluating whether the overall pattern of results were comparable for White and Hispanic/Latina girls.

Method

Participants

Participants were 446 girls enrolled in grades 10–12. Ages ranged from 15 to 19 years ($M = 16.79$), with 38.3% ($n = 171$) of the participants 15–16 years and 61.7% ($n = 275$) of participants 17–19 years. The girls came from predominantly middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds using Hollingshead Social Class structure (father's occupation: $M_{dn} = 7.00$, standard deviation (s.d.) = 2.19; mother's occupation: $M_{dn} = 6.00$, s.d. = 1.86; 1 reflects occupations

requiring no training and 9 reflects occupations that require graduate school). The ethnic composition of the sample was: 67.0% Latina ($n = 299$), 16.6% non-Hispanic Caucasian ($n = 74$), 8.1% Black ($n = 36$), and 8.3% mixed/other ($n = 37$). These demographics are consistent with the population of the metropolitan county, which is predominantly Hispanic. Primary language was English for 86.1% of the sample, Spanish for 8.9%, equal between English and Spanish for 3.0%, and other language for 1.6%.

Procedure

Adolescents were recruited from two high schools located in South Florida as part of a study of adolescents' peer relations. Permission forms were distributed to approximately 2369 students. Parental consent was obtained for all participating students under the age of 18 years and assent was obtained for all participants. The full sample consisted of 950 adolescents (383 boys; 567 girls). Only responses from girls were used in the present study. Of the 567 participating girls, 37 did not complete all of the questionnaires, 81 had inconsistencies in their dating involvement, and three did not provide their age; therefore, these individuals ($n = 121$; 21.3%) were not included in the analyses. Participants did not differ from those who were excluded with respect to ethnicity, grade, or socioeconomic status nor in terms of their positive or negative friendship qualities.

Adolescents completed a Dating Questionnaire, the Network of Relationship Inventory-Revised (NRI-R), and the Peer Relations Questionnaire, and provided information on ethnicity and parental occupation. For all questionnaires, a friend was defined as "a person who you like, to whom you feel close, and with whom you spend time". A romantic partner was defined as "someone you are physically attracted to, have had intimate contact with (e.g. hand holding, kissing, etc.), you consider to be more than a friend and go out on 'dates' with". Dating was defined as "spending time with someone of the opposite sex who you are romantically interested in and who is also romantically interested in you. It can occur in a small group (e.g. double-date) or with just the two of you."

Measures

Dating information: To assess girls' dating involvement, a Dating Questionnaire was developed, based on a dating history questionnaire (Furman, 1994), a dating survey used in a study examining adolescents' same- and cross-sex friendships (Kuttler, La Greca, & Prinstein, 1999), and extensive pilot testing. Adolescents described their *current* level of dating involvement using the following categories: (a) not dating now, (b) dating or seeing one person casually, (c) dating or seeing more than one person casually, (d) mostly going out with one person and dating a few others, (e) have an exclusive relationship with someone (only seeing each other, but not yet planning to get engaged, married, or live together), (f) have a very serious relationship with one person (planning to get engaged, married, or live together), (g) engaged or living with someone, or (h) married. Adolescents were then categorized by their level of dating involvement: *not dating* (category a), *casually dating* (categories b–d), or *seriously dating* (categories e–h). To help validate the use of these classifications, several analyses were conducted. Casual and serious daters were found to differ significantly on several important indicators of the level of dating involvement (see Table 1). Specifically, compared to casual daters, girls in serious romantic relationships have been

Table 1
Descriptive information about adolescent girls who are currently casually and seriously dating

	Casual daters (<i>n</i> = 75)	Serious daters (<i>n</i> = 208)	Statistic	<i>p</i> -value
Mean (s.d.) number of months dating	2.94 (3.90)	4.88 (4.33)	$F(2, 282) = 6.25$	0.001
Mean hours (s.d.) with boyfriend each week	15.02 (13.29)	28.49 (26.02)	$F(2, 282) = 7.62$	0.001
Sexual intercourse			$\chi^2(1) = 15.40$	0.001
No	60.0%	40.0%		
Yes	34.0%	66.0%		
In love			$\chi^2(2) = 71.82$	0.001
No	45.3%	9.1%		
Not sure	37.3%	21.1%		
Yes	17.3%	69.9%		
Marriage			$\chi^2(4) = 91.16$	0.001
Definitely not	25.3%	2.4%		
Probably not	46.7%	12.6%		
Maybe	18.7%	38.6%		
Probably yes	4.0%	28.5%		
Definitely yes	5.3%	17.9%		

dating significantly longer, spent more time each week with their boyfriends, were more likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse with their boyfriends, were more likely to state that they were “in love”, and were more likely to consider getting married to their boyfriend.

Adolescents also indicated which category *usually* describes their dating involvement: (a) have never dated, (b) rarely date, (c) date casually, without an exclusive commitment, or (d) involved in an exclusive relationship with someone. These categories were used in the peer-network analyses. To help validate these categories of usual dating involvement, several analyses were conducted. Adolescent girls who never date, rarely date, casually date, and seriously date were found to differ significantly on important indicators of dating patterns (see Table 2). Girls who rarely date had their first date at an older age than girls who usually date casually or seriously. In addition, girls who rarely date had fewer boyfriends than casual or serious daters and dated fewer people in the past 12 months than casual daters. Casual daters had more boyfriends and dated more people in the past 12 months than serious daters. Finally, girls who have never dated and rarely date were more likely to be not currently dating, casual daters were more likely to currently be in a casual relationship, and serious daters were more likely to be in a serious relationship currently. These results provide support for the validity of the dating categories derived from girls' responses on this questionnaire.

Relationship quality: The NRI-R assessed relationship qualities (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The NRI-R measures nine positive relationship qualities (i.e. companionship, affection, disclosure, nurturance, instrumental aid, approval, support, reliable alliance, and satisfaction) and five negative interactions (i.e. conflict, criticism, exclusion, dominance, and pressure) (see Table 3). The presence of each quality in a relationship is assessed by three items, rated on a

Table 2
Descriptive information about adolescent girls according to usual dating involvement

	Never dated (<i>n</i> = 52)	Rarely date (<i>n</i> = 91)	Casually date (<i>n</i> = 130)	Seriously date (<i>n</i> = 173)	Statistic	<i>p</i> -value
Mean (s.d.) age of 1st date	—	14.58 ^a (1.37)	13.71 ^b (1.52)	13.93 ^b (1.45)	$F(3, 378) = 6.48$	0.001
Mean (s.d.) no. of boyfriends	—	2.80 ^b (2.34)	6.67 ^c (6.03)	5.06 ^d (4.01)	$F(3, 392) = 15.30$	0.001
Mean (s.d.) no. of people dated in past 12 months	—	1.46 ^b (1.67)	2.79 ^c (2.28)	1.82 ^b (1.77)	$F(3, 390) = 12.24$	0.001
Current dating involvement					$\chi^2(6) = 263.75$	0.001
Not dating	100.0%	64.8%	29.2%	6.4%		
Casually dating	0.0%	7.7%	38.5%	10.4%		
Seriously dating	0.0%	27.5%	32.3%	83.2%		

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly at the $\alpha=0.05$ level.

five-point Likert scale where 1 = “little or none” and 5 = “the most”. Adolescents completed the scales for their best same-sex friend and romantic partner (if applicable). If adolescents were dating more than one individual, they were directed to answer the questions for the person they liked the best or with whom they felt closest.

To reduce the number of subscales, two sets of principal component analyses with a varimax rotation were conducted for all the items; one set used adolescents’ responses for their best friends and another used responses for romantic partners. Subscales were removed if one or more items did not load consistently with the other item(s) in its scale (i.e. nurturance, instrumental aid, approval, dominance, criticism, and exclusion). A follow-up set of principal component factor analyses with a varimax rotation was conducted for the remaining items (i.e. companionship, affection, disclosure, support, satisfaction, reliable alliance, conflict, and pressure). Results yielded a six-factor solution for both best friends and romantic partners with companionship as one factor, affection as one factor, disclosure and support as a combined factor, reliable alliance and satisfaction as a combined factor, and conflict and pressure as two separate negative factors (see Table 3). The loadings were virtually identical for NRI-R scores for romantic partners. Thus, the factors derived from this analysis were used to measure relationship quality. Internal consistencies were high for the positive variables (Cronbach’s alpha range = 0.89–0.92) and adequate for the negative variables (Cronbach’s alpha range = 0.72–0.75). The reliabilities were similar for all ethnic groups. The mean scores were calculated for each relationship quality separately for adolescents’ same-sex best friend and romantic partner.

Peer networks: A modified version of the Peer Relations Questionnaire (Connolly & Johnson, 1996) assessed peer-network size and structure. Adolescents listed their romantic partner, best same-sex friend, and up to nine additional friends. Adolescents indicated the gender of each person and whether that person had a boyfriend or girlfriend. Network size was calculated by summing the total number of friends listed (excluding romantic partner). Thus, the maximum number of friends for any adolescent was 10. Peer group structure was determined by calculating the number of opposite-sex friends (i.e. boys) and number of friends (boys or girls) who had a romantic partner.

Table 3
Final factor loadings of NRI-R scores for best friends

Relationship quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
Companionship						
How often do you spend fun time with this person?	0.12	0.18	0.84	0.05	0.00	0.02
How often do you and this person go places together?	0.24	0.16	0.75	0.19	0.13	0.03
How often do you play around and have fun together?	0.30	0.23	0.67	0.08	-0.06	0.06
Affection						
How much do you like or love them?	0.30	0.28	0.05	0.74	-0.03	-0.04
How much does this person care about you?	0.38	0.36	0.11	0.61	-0.08	-0.06
How much do they have strong feelings for you?	0.19	0.14	0.19	0.78	-0.07	-0.14
Disclosure						
How often do you tell them things don't want others to know?	0.76	0.08	0.16	0.08	0.08	-0.02
How often do you tell them everything you're going through?	0.77	0.20	0.22	0.11	-0.09	-0.03
How often do you share secrets and private feelings?	0.71	0.21	0.22	0.22	-0.06	-0.02
Support						
How often do you turn to them for support with problems?	0.75	0.26	0.11	0.14	0.04	-0.07
How often do you depend on them for help, advice, or sympathy?	0.62	0.18	0.04	0.21	-0.05	0.04
When feeling upset, how often do they cheer you up?	0.60	0.39	0.14	0.15	-0.06	0.02
Reliable alliance						
How sure that this relationship will last no matter what?	0.18	0.81	0.08	0.24	-0.04	-0.03
How sure that your relationship will last in spite of fights?	0.23	0.72	0.02	0.30	-0.03	0.04
How sure that your relationship will continue?	0.15	0.78	0.16	0.28	-0.07	-0.07
Satisfaction						
How happy are you with your relationship with this person?	0.32	0.66	0.29	-0.06	-0.18	-0.12
How much do you like the way things are with you and them?	0.34	0.66	0.34	0.04	-0.23	-0.15
How satisfied are you with your relationship with them?	0.32	0.72	0.25	0.01	-0.22	-0.11
Conflict						
How often do you disagree and quarrel with each other?	0.21	-0.09	-0.04	-0.05	0.77	0.06
How often do you get in fights with each other?	-0.06	-0.08	0.27	-0.04	0.85	0.13
How often do you argue with each other?	-0.02	-0.16	0.05	-0.04	0.79	0.20
Pressure						
How often do they push you to do things you don't want to do?	-0.04	-0.14	0.04	-0.07	0.04	0.81
How often do they try to get you to do thing you don't like?	-0.02	-0.04	0.05	-0.10	0.17	0.83
How often do they pressure you to do things s/he wants?	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.00	0.21	0.78

Note: The factor loadings were virtually identical for NRI-R scores for romantic partners.

Test-retest reliabilities of the total number of friends (e.g. number of same- and opposite-sex friends) have been found to be good (range = 0.65–0.80) (Connolly & Johnson, 1996). Moderate correlations have been found between self-reports and peer reports of in-school/same-sex friends, suggesting that the peer-network indices are most appropriately viewed as the adolescents' perceptions of their peer experiences (Connolly & Johnson, 1996).

Results

Overview of analyses

Descriptive analyses were conducted prior to examining the main study goals. For each set of analyses, dating involvement (not dating, casually dating, seriously dating) and age (15–16 years; 17–19 years) were factors in the design. Although there were no predictions for ethnic differences, all analyses were repeated with ethnicity as an additional factor; only Whites and Latinas were included in these analyses, given the small number of girls in the other ethnic groups. Very few significant findings were obtained for ethnicity, and they are reported below.

Descriptive information on adolescents' dating relationships

The girls' *current* dating involvement was as follows: 35.9% ($n = 160$) not dating, 16.8% ($n = 75$) casually dating, and 47.3% ($n = 211$) seriously dating. Girls' reports of their *usual* dating involvement revealed that 11.7% ($n = 52$) had never dated, 20.4% ($n = 91$) rarely date, 29.1% ($n = 130$) are usually casually dating, and 38.8% ($n = 173$) are usually seriously dating. No significant differences were found in the likelihood of current or usual dating as a function of ethnicity (White, Latina), but differences were found for age. Older girls were significantly more likely to be seriously dating (52.0%) than younger adolescent girls (39.8%), $\chi^2(2) = 6.39, p < 0.05$. Similarly, older adolescent girls were less likely to have never dated (7.6%) than younger adolescent girls (18.1%), $\chi^2(3) = 14.16, p < 0.01$.

Best friendship quality and current dating involvement

The first goal of this study was to determine whether dating involvement was related to the quality of adolescent girls' best friendships. Serious daters were expected to have lower levels of companionship with best friends than non-daters. In addition, daters were expected to have fewer negative interactions with best friends than non-daters. One MANOVA was conducted for the positive interaction variables (i.e. companionship, affection, disclosure/support, reliable alliance/satisfaction) and one for the negative interaction variables (i.e. conflict, pressure). (Intercorrelations among the positive variables ranged from 0.36 to 0.51 and for the negative variables was 0.31, all p 's < 0.05 .) Dating involvement (not dating, casually dating, seriously dating) and age (15–16 years, 17–19 years) were the between-groups factors in the MANOVAs.

Positive interactions: For the positive interaction variables, the MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for dating involvement (Pillai's $F(8, 876) = 3.10, p < 0.01$) (see Table 4). Univariate analyses revealed that the effect of dating involvement was significant for companionship and disclosure/support. Serious daters had significantly less companionship with friends than non-daters and casual daters. For disclosure/support, analyses revealed that casual daters had higher levels of disclosure/support from their best friends than did non-daters or serious daters. No significant effects of age and no significant interactions were detected.

Negative interactions: For the negative interaction variables, the MANOVA revealed a significant effect for dating involvement (Pillai's $F(4, 880) = 3.41, p < 0.01$). Univariate analyses revealed that this effect was significant for conflict and pressure (see Table 4). Non-daters reported

Table 4

Mean (s.d.) levels of positive and negative interactions with best friends by adolescent girls' current dating involvement

	Not dating (<i>n</i> = 160)	Casually dating (<i>n</i> = 75)	Seriously dating (<i>n</i> = 211)	Dating <i>F</i> (2, 446)
Positive interaction				
Companionship	4.07 ^a (0.70)	4.21 ^a (0.78)	3.84 ^b (0.82)	6.04 ^{**}
Affection	4.47 (0.68)	4.64 (0.58)	4.53 (0.59)	—
Disclosure/support	4.11 ^a (0.80)	4.39 ^b (0.67)	4.15 ^a (0.75)	3.96 [*]
Rel. alliance/satisfaction	4.39 (0.71)	4.53 (0.74)	4.46 (0.63)	—
Negative interaction				
Conflict	2.00 ^a (0.85)	1.94 (0.91)	1.75 ^b (0.76)	4.83 ^{**}
Pressure	1.53 ^a (0.70)	1.51 (0.68)	1.35 ^b (0.65)	4.12 [*]

Note: Means with different superscripts are significantly different.

**p* < 0.05.

***p* < 0.01.

higher levels of conflict and pressure from best friends than serious daters. No significant main effects of age and no interactions were revealed.

Relationship qualities of best friends and romantic partners

A second study goal was to examine relationship qualities of best friends and romantic partners. Level of dating involvement and age were expected to moderate the amount of positive and negative interactions that adolescent girls experienced with their best friends and romantic partners. These analyses were restricted to girls who had a best friend and who were also involved in a romantic relationship (*n* = 286; 64.1%).

Positive interaction: A repeated-measures MANOVA was conducted for the set of four positive interaction variables. Current dating involvement (casually dating, seriously dating) and age (15–16 years, 17–19 years) were the between-subjects factors and type of relationship (friend, boyfriend) was the within-subjects factor. (Correlations between the positive interaction variables ranged from 0.36 to 0.51 for best friends and from 0.54 to 0.64 for romantic partners; *p*'s < 0.05.) Significant effects were obtained for type of relationship (Pillai's *F*(1, 280) = 25.88, *p* < 0.001), dating involvement (Pillai's *F*(1, 280) = 44.53, *p* < 0.001), type of relationship by dating involvement (Pillai's *F*(1, 280) = 97.98, *p* < 0.001), and type of relationship by age (Pillai's *F*(1, 280) = 10.03, *p* < 0.01).

Table 5 summarizes the results for dating involvement. It was hypothesized that serious daters would rely more on romantic partners than best friends for positive interactions, whereas casual daters would rely more on best friends than romantic partners. Main effects for type of relationship were revealed for disclosure/support and reliable alliance/satisfaction, but were qualified by significant interactions. Specifically, significant type of relationship by dating involvement interactions were observed for all positive interaction variables. As anticipated, serious daters received significantly more companionship, affection, and disclosure/support from

Table 5

Mean (s.d.) levels of positive and negative interactions with best friends and boyfriends by adolescent girls' current dating involvement

	Casual daters		Serious daters		F(1, 274)		
	Best friend	Boyfriend	Best friend	Boyfriend	Dating	Type	Dating × type
Positive interaction							
Companionship	4.21 ^a (0.78)	3.81 ^b (0.89)	3.83 ^a (0.82)	4.55 ^b (0.60)	7.32 ^{**}	—	62.41 ^{***}
Affection	4.64 ^a (0.58)	4.18 ^b (0.84)	4.53 ^a (0.59)	4.83 ^b (0.40)	21.00 ^{***}	—	44.44 ^{***}
Disclosure/Support	4.39 ^a (0.67)	3.38 ^b (1.08)	4.15 ^a (0.75)	4.35 ^b (0.73)	23.04 ^{**}	41.04 ^{***}	70.87 ^{***}
Rel. Alliance/Satis.	4.53 ^a (0.74)	3.41 ^b (1.15)	4.46 (0.63)	4.38 ^b (0.64)	32.95 ^{***}	102.20 ^{***}	68.42 ^{***}
Negative Interaction							
Conflict	1.94 ^a (0.91)	2.52 ^b (1.20)	1.75 ^a (0.76)	2.52 ^b (1.01)	—	79.05 ^{***}	—
Pressure	1.51 ^{a,c} (0.68)	1.68 ^{b,c} (0.85)	1.35 ^{a,d} (0.65)	1.42 ^{b,d} (0.61)	7.84 ^{**}	5.65 [*]	—

Note: Casual daters: n = 75; serious daters: n = 211. Means with different superscripts within each category of dating are significantly different.

*p < 0.05.

**p < 0.01.

***p < 0.001.

Table 6

Mean (s.d.) levels of positive and negative interactions with best friends and boyfriends by age

	Younger		Older		F(1, 274)
	Best friend	Boyfriend	Best friend	Boyfriend	Age × type
Positive interaction					
Companionship	4.08 (0.77)	4.20 (0.86)	3.84 ^a (0.84)	4.44 ^b (0.69)	8.40 ^{**}
Affection	4.56 (0.54)	4.57 (0.68)	4.56 (0.61)	4.71 (0.58)	—
Disclosure/support	4.36 ^a (0.61)	3.90 ^b (1.02)	4.14 (0.79)	4.20 (0.87)	11.24 ^{***}
Rel. alliance/satis.	4.59 ^a (0.50)	4.00 ^b (1.03)	4.42 ^a (0.73)	4.19 ^b (0.83)	7.72 ^{**}
Negative interaction					
Conflict	1.71 (0.65)	2.46 (1.07)	1.83 (0.87)	2.54 (1.07)	—
Pressure	1.36 (0.64)	1.45 (0.66)	1.39 (0.66)	1.51 (0.71)	—

Note: N = 278; younger: n = 97, older: n = 181. Means with different superscripts within each category of dating are significantly different.

**p < 0.01.

***p < 0.001.

boyfriends than best friends. In contrast, casual daters received significantly more companionship, affection, disclosure/support, and reliable alliance/satisfaction from best friends than boyfriends.

In addition, significant type of relationship by age interactions were observed for companionship, disclosure/support, and reliable alliance/satisfaction (see Table 6). Older girls experienced more companionship with boyfriends than their best friends, whereas for younger girls, companionship levels were similar for best friends and boyfriends. Younger girls reported

more disclosure/support with best friends than boyfriends, while older girls reported similar levels in their best friendships and romantic relationships. Both younger and older girls reported more reliable alliance/satisfaction in their best friendships than their romantic relationships.

In exploratory analyses that included ethnicity (White, Latina) as an additional factor, a significant multivariate relationship type by age by ethnicity interaction was detected, Pillai's $F(1, 231) = 12.14, p < 0.05$. No other interactions with ethnicity were revealed. Follow-up ANOVAs were conducted separately for each positive friendship quality; Geisser–Greenhouse corrected tests evaluated significance. The only significant finding for ethnicity was a type of relationship by age by ethnicity interaction for companionship ($F(1, 232) = 6.78, p < 0.01$) and disclosure/support ($F(1, 232) = 5.43, p < 0.05$). In both cases, differences between Whites and Latinas were only observed for the younger girls. In general, White girls reported more companionship with boyfriends than best friends, as did older Latina girls. However, younger Latinas reported more companionship with best friends. In addition, White girls and older Latina girls reported more disclosure/support with romantic partners than best friends, whereas younger Latinas reported more with their best friends.

Negative interaction: Similar analyses were conducted for the negative interaction variables. Negative interactions were expected to be higher in romantic relationships than in best friendships. (Intercorrelations between the negative interaction variables were 0.31 for best friends and 0.39 for romantic partners, p 's < 0.05 .) Significant effects were obtained for type of relationship (Pillai's $F(1, 281) = 60.24, p < 0.001$) and dating involvement (Pillai's $F(1, 281) = 6.29, p < 0.05$); follow-up ANOVAs were conducted (see Tables 5 and 6). For pressure, a main effect for dating involvement revealed that casual daters reported higher levels of pressure ($M_{\text{est.}} = 1.59, \text{s.e.} = 0.05$) in their relationships than serious daters ($M_{\text{est.}} = 1.37, \text{s.e.} = 0.04$). A main effect for type of relationship also revealed that romantic relationships were rated higher in pressure ($M_{\text{est.}} = 1.54, \text{s.e.} = 0.05$) than best friendships ($M_{\text{est.}} = 1.43, \text{s.e.} = 0.05$). No significant interactions were revealed.

Peer group structure and usual dating involvement

The third major goal of this study was to evaluate whether the size and structure of the peer network is related to dating involvement. Peer-network size was expected to be larger for casually dating girls in comparison to girls who never, rarely, or seriously date. An ANOVA was conducted with *usual* dating involvement (never dated, rarely date, casually date, seriously date) and age (15–16 years, 17–19 years) as the between-subjects factors and total number of friends as the dependent variable. Significant main effects were observed for usual dating involvement, $F(3, 447) = 5.82, p < 0.001$, and age $F(1, 447) = 6.61, p < 0.01$. As expected, girls who casually date had more friends than girls who have never dated, rarely date, and seriously date (see Table 7). In addition, younger girls had more friends ($M = 8.43, \text{s.d.} = 2.06$) than older adolescent girls ($M = 8.04, \text{s.d.} = 2.26$).

Adolescents who usually date (casually or seriously) were expected to have more opposite-sex friends and more friends who date than adolescents who never or rarely date. A MANCOVA was conducted with *usual* dating involvement and age as the between-subjects factors and number of cross-sex friends and number of friends with boy/girlfriends as the dependent variables. Total

Table 7

Means (s.d.) of peer network size and composition by adolescent girls' usual dating involvement

	Never dated (<i>n</i> = 52)	Rarely date (<i>n</i> = 91)	Casually date (<i>n</i> = 130)	Seriously date (<i>n</i> = 173)	<i>F</i> s (3, 447)
Total number of friends	7.67 ^a (2.35)	8.02 ^a (2.37)	8.80 ^b (1.87)	7.97 ^a (2.18)	5.82***
No. of cross-sex friends	1.46 ^{a,c} (1.32)	2.21 ^a (1.62)	3.02 ^b (1.77)	2.32 ^{a,d} (1.70)	7.20***
No. of friends with boyfriends	2.65 ^a (1.97)	3.13 (2.01)	3.41 (1.83)	3.71 ^b (1.92)	5.23**

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

number of friends was used as a covariate, because peer-network size differed across levels of usual dating involvement. The covariate was significant (Pillai's $F(2, 436) = 121.39$, $p < 0.001$), as was the effect for dating involvement (Pillai's $F(6, 874) = 6.34$, $p < 0.001$). Univariate analyses were significant for number of cross-sex friends and number of friends with boy/girlfriends (Table 7). As expected, (a) girls who casually date had more cross-sex friends than girls who had never dated, rarely date, and seriously date; (b) girls who seriously date had more cross-sex friends than girls who never dated; and (c) girls who seriously date had more friends with boy/girlfriends than those who have never dated.

Discussion

The present study may be the first to examine the linkages between romantic relationships and best, same-sex friendships in an ethnically diverse sample of mid- to late-adolescent girls. Results showed that by mid- to late adolescence, dating is a common experience, and the likelihood of being romantically involved increases significantly with age. This is consistent with the developmental literature describing a shift in attention from same- to opposite-sex peers from early to late adolescence, that facilitates the development of romantic relationships (Furman, 1989).

A primary study goal was to examine how dating is related to the positive and negative qualities of adolescent girls' best same-sex friendships. Consistent with expectations, dating was generally not associated with "costs" to best friendships. Where differences were found, they generally favoured girls who were dating. For example, causal daters had more disclosure/support with best friends. Dating may enhance feelings of closeness with best friends by eliciting discussions of romance and sexuality, consistent with findings that adolescent girls utilize cliques for these types of discussions (Simon et al., 1992). Sullivan recognized the importance of key relationships for learning different social competencies. To succeed in romantic relationships, Sullivan argued that one must have developed interpersonal and conflict resolution skills through friendships. This notion was supported by the present findings, as serious daters had less conflict and pressure with their best friends than non-daters.

Although the results are consistent with Sullivan's theory, the one exception was that serious daters reported less companionship with best friends than non-daters or casual daters. As romantic partners become more central in the lives of adolescent girls, more time is spent with boyfriends, leaving less time for friendships. Thus, the one trade-off between best friends and romantic partners seems to be time spent together. Dating only appears to be accompanied by this "cost" when the dating relationship is serious, and seems to be reflected mostly in terms of quantity rather than quality of best friendships.

Girls' dating involvement was found to be important for understanding the linkage between dating relationships and friendships. Failure to account for this may be why conflicting outcomes have been associated with adolescent dating. In particular, the present study revealed the "benefits" of dating to be limited to casual daters and the "cost" of dating limited to serious daters. Recent research has shown that adolescents often feel neglected when their friends start dating and guilt may be an issue for the dating adolescent (Roth & Parker, 2001), especially when adolescents and their peers are in the initial phases of dating (Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Future research should therefore examine more closely the role of the peer group and level of dating involvement as moderators in this process.

In addition to dating involvement, other variables may be important to consider in future research. For example, Sullivan suggested that general social competence developed at an earlier age might contribute to success in both friendships and romantic relationships. Moreover, peer competencies are themselves predicted by the qualities of parent-child relationships that precede them (Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999). Other variables also need to be considered in the development of romantic relationships. For example, popular and physically attractive adolescents have more friends (Baktay-Korsos, 1999) and thus, may have more opportunities to develop social skills, particularly with opposite-sex peers, than other adolescents. In addition, pubertal timing may also hasten girls' transition from friendships to dating relationships. Early maturing girls have been found to date at an earlier age than late maturers (Lam et al., 2002) and may become less "in tune" with their close friends.

A second major study goal was to compare the positive and negative qualities observed in best friendships versus those in romantic relationships for those who were dating, and to examine age as a moderating factor. Consistent with expectations, across all relationship qualities, younger girls relied more heavily on their best friends than boyfriends, whereas older girls increasingly sought support from their boyfriends over their best friends. This pattern is most consistent with social exchange theory, as the shift in attention from best friends to romantic partners appears to be progressive. These results are also consistent with developmental theories that indicate that cognitive maturation and increasing independence provide adolescents more opportunities to explore romantic relationships (Laursen, 1996).

A key finding of this study was that the level of dating involvement was important in adolescents' reliance on best friends versus romantic partners. Consistent with expectations, the same basic pattern was revealed: for companionship, affection, disclosure/support, and reliable alliance/satisfaction, casual daters received more of these qualities from best friends than boyfriends, whereas serious daters received more from boyfriends than best friends. These findings suggest that as adolescent girls become more involved in romantic relationships, they show increasing reliance on them for support. This is consistent with social exchange theory and research, and suggests that by the time girls' romantic relationships are

serious in nature, they have become more important than friendships (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993).

Although Sullivanian theory has not considered level of dating involvement, social exchange theory suggests that this is central to the gradual shift from voluntary, exchange relationships focused on the individual to obligatory, and interdependent relationships with romantic partners (Laursen & Jensen-Campbell, 1999). This shift may occur because romantic partners offer more than best friends in terms of rewards (Laursen, 1996). Although best friends offer companionship, affiliation, and emotional support, romantic partners also offer the opportunity for sexual activity. With increasing dating involvement and maturity, sexual exploration and gratification become more important. An obvious result of this is increased investment in romantic relationships, which can gratify the needs that friends cannot (Laursen, 1996). Moreover, it should not be surprising that from mid-adolescence to young adulthood, there is greater reliance on romantic partners than friends (Laursen & Williams, 1997), a pattern supported by the present study.

Interestingly, while girls seem to increasingly turn to their boyfriends for support as they mature, girls perceived more conflict and pressure in their romantic relationships compared to their best friendships. This conflict and pressure could revolve around behaviours associated with dating, such as drug and alcohol use and sexual activities (Moon, Hecht, Jackson, & Spellers, 1999). This has particularly important implications for serious daters, who increasingly look towards their romantic partners for advice and support. However, it has been suggested that rewards improve relationships more than costs hurt relationships, as minor negative interactions (e.g. conflict, pressure) likely have little detrimental influence until a critical threshold of negativity is reached (Rusbult, 1983).

In addition, compared to serious daters, casual daters reported more conflict in their romantic relationships. Because the casual couple may not have learned to communicate as well as serious couples, girls may feel more pressure to conform to their partners' wishes than those in serious relationships. Furthermore, there may be gender differences in expectations of romantic relationships, which may contribute to perceived pressure in relationships, as Feiring (1996) found that adolescent boys and girls describe their romantic relationships differently. Therefore, gender differences are an important area to be explored in future research on romantic relationships.

Although evaluating ethnic differences in girls' romantic relationships and friendships was not a primary goal of this study, the findings shed some light on this issue. Overall, the findings appear to generalize to primarily English-speaking White and Latina adolescent girls, who reside in an ethnically diverse metropolitan area. In general, results were similar for Latina and White girls, with very few ethnic differences observed. The two exceptions focused on younger Latina girls. First, although all girls relied less on romantic partners than best friends for disclosure and support, this discrepancy was more striking for younger Latina girls. Second, younger Latina girls did not rely more heavily on romantic partners than friends for companionship, unlike White girls and older Latina girls. These patterns for younger Latina girls may reflect differences in cultural norms for dating in Hispanic/Latino communities. It has been suggested that Hispanic girls have greater restraints on dating, as Hispanic families view their daughters as needing protection and chaperoning (Gaines, Buriel, Liu, & Ríos, 1997). The close supervision of Hispanic girls may only be lifted in late adolescence, which would allow for increased contact with romantic partners, and

greater opportunities for companionship and support. It is possible that the few ethnic differences observed for younger Latina girls in this study may reflect their family's level of acculturation, a factor that would be of interest to explore in the future.

The third study goal was to examine how the structure and size of the peer network is related to adolescent girls' involvement in romantic relationships. As expected, girls who usually date had the most friends overall and the most opposite-sex friends, and serious daters had the most friends with romantic partners. These results indicate that peer groups are central to the development of dating relationships in adolescents. Peer-network composition likely reflects adolescents' readiness for dating, where larger heterosexual peer groups serve as a context in which dating behaviours can be practiced and smaller peer groups are associated with pre-dating behaviour and involvement in serious romantic relationships (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Furman, 1989).

Despite the present study's contributions to understanding the links between adolescent girls' best friendships and romantic relationships, there are several caveats and issues for future research. First, this study focused only on the relationships of adolescent girls. The development and nature of romantic relationships may differ for boys and girls, as girls have been shown to be interested in dating at an earlier age (Sharabany et al., 1981) and have been found to rate their friendships higher on many friendship qualities than adolescent boys (Clark-Lempers et al., 1991; Kuttler et al., 1999). Future research might examine gender differences in romantic relationships and their linkages with close friendships and peer groups.

Second, the present study focused only on adolescent girls' involvement in heterosexual romantic relationships. We did not have an adequate sample to explore the development of homosexual relationships, but this is an important consideration for the future. Research in this area would be extremely important for developing theoretical models that account for diversity and commonalities in the emergence of homosexual and heterosexual romantic relationships.

Third, information was only obtained from the adolescents. For friendships and social functioning, adolescents are considered to be the best informants (e.g. La Greca & Lemanek, 1996). Indeed, studies of friendships have typically relied solely on adolescents' reports (e.g. Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; La Greca & Lopez, 1998), and the limitations of adult informants for adolescents' friendships have been noted (e.g. La Greca & Lemanek, 1996). Nevertheless, it would be useful to supplement adolescents' perspectives with peer or parent reports.

The present study provides a one-time snapshot of adolescents' best friendships and dating relationships. Given the paucity of literature on romantic relationships, it was appropriate to investigate this issue in a correlational design. However, longitudinal designs will be essential for capturing the dynamic nature of social relationships and for examining causal processes. Research designs that track the development of romantic relationships over time and establish linkages with friendships would be especially useful and informative.

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