

# Relationship Pathways

From Adolescence to Young Adulthood

*This book is dedicated to Duane Buhrmester (1952–2010).*

**Brett Laursen**  
*Florida Atlantic University*

**W. Andrew Collins**  
*University of Minnesota*  
Editors

 **SAGE**

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.

2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
E-mail: [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP  
United KingdomSAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044  
IndiaSAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
33 Pekin Street #02-01  
Far East Square  
Singapore 048673

Printed in the United States of America  
*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Relationships pathways : from adolescence to young adulthood / Brett Laursen, W. Andrew Collins, editors.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-8739-4 (pbk.)

Acquisitions Editor: Vicki Knight  
Associate Editor: Lauren Habib  
Editorial Assistant: Katie Koscielak  
Production Editor: Eric Garner  
Copy Editor: Megan Markanich  
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.  
Proofreader: Laura Webb  
Indexer: Jean Casalegno  
Cover Designer: Candice Harman  
Marketing Manager: Liz Thornton  
Permissions Editor: Adele Hutchinson

Copyright © 2012 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

## Brief Contents

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Preface  
*Brett Laursen*

About the Editors

List of Contributors

### I. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

1. Transformations in Close Relationship Networks:  
Parent-Child Relationships and Their Social Extensions  
*W. Andrew Collins, K. Lee Raby, José M. Causadias*

2. Transformations in Parent-Child Relationships  
From Adolescence to Adulthood  
*Nancy L. Galambos, Lauren A. Kotylak*

3. Transformations in Sibling Relationships  
From Adolescence to Adulthood  
*Lilly Shanahan, Evelyn B. Waite, Timothy W. Boyd II*

### II. FRIENDSHIPS AND FRIEND NETWORKS

4. Transformations in Friend Relationships  
Across the Transition Into Adolescence  
*Christopher A. Halen, Brett Laursen, Dawn DeLay*

5. Transformations in Friend Relationships  
Across the Transition Into Adulthood  
*Chong Man Chow, Holly Roelse, Duane Buhrmester, Marion K. Underwood*

This book is printed on acid-free paper.  
11 12 13 14 15 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Transformations in Friend Relationships Across the Transition Into Adulthood

*Chong Man Chow*

*Holly Roelse*

*Duane Buhrmester*

*Marion K. Underwood*

**I**ntricate exchanges of self-disclosure and support represent the central features of friendship during adolescence and young adulthood (Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Fehr, 2004). Through intimate conversations, best friends share their secrets, problems, and feelings, as well as provide each other with validation and emotional support. Indeed, there is considerable research demonstrating that close

---

This is dedicated to Duane Buhrmester, our dearest mentor, colleague, and friend.

friends are among the most common partners adolescents and young adults turn to when distressed (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997) and that receiving social support from friends has important implications for multiple domains of individual and social adjustment (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). Given the significance of intimate friendships, it is not surprising that the dynamics and development of friendship have attracted considerable attention from both developmental and social psychologists.

Existing studies on adolescent and young adult friendships are broadly organized by two approaches: (1) *developmental* and (2) *individual differences*. Researchers who adopt a developmental approach are typically interested in *how* and *why* intimate friendship changes over the course of adolescence and young adulthood. This body of literature focuses on developmental changes in perceived closeness and intimacy, self-disclosure, and social support that occur in friendships over time. Developmental research also emphasizes that the developmental changes that occur in friendships over time are partially explained by changing social needs and involvement in different relational roles. Researchers who adopt an individual differences approach, in contrast, are typically interested in the different levels of disclosure and support/validation that occur between friends, as well as the behavioral interdependence of disclosure and support in friendships. Together, the developmental and individual differences approaches offer distinctive, yet complementary perspectives on friendship intimacy in adolescence and young adulthood by addressing the overall changes that typically occur in adolescent friendships as well as the interactions that occur between the specific individuals in a friendship.

The focus of this chapter is on intimate friendships during adolescence and early adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006), where friendship intimacy is broadly defined as subjective perceptions of closeness and intimacy, as well as the intimate behavioral exchanges of self-disclosure and coping/support (Reis & Shaver, 1988). The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the major theories that pertain to the development of and individual differences in friendship intimacy during adolescence and young adulthood. The second section highlights existing research that resides within the developmental and individual differences frameworks. Last, the third section provides suggestions for future directions in friendship research based on existing approaches.

## CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO FRIENDSHIP INTIMACY

### Developmental Approaches to Friendship Intimacy

Developmental approaches to friendship intimacy focus on the changes that occur in friendships over the course of adolescence and young adulthood. Developmental theorists are often concerned with how and why friendships change during this important period in life. The most prominent theoretical perspectives on the development of intimate friendships are Harry Stack Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory and those of writers who have elaborated on his seminal work (e.g. Buhrmester & Furman, 1986; Youniss, 1980). According to Sullivan, early adolescence is an important turning point when the *need for intimacy exchange* begins to emerge. This is a period when adolescents are motivated to establish social relationships beyond family bonds in order to fulfill their intimacy needs. The egalitarian nature of adolescent friendship provides an ideal context for the expression of intimacy, where the mutual disclosure of feelings, secrets, and personal vulnerability becomes the prominent dyadic process.

Coupled with increased self-disclosure, friends are also expected to take on a support-giving (or caregiving) role with each other. As Sullivan (1953) contended, rather than the egotistical attitude of "what should do to get what I want," adolescents begin to develop an attitude of "what should I do to contribute to the happiness or to support the prestige and feeling of worthwhileness of my chum" (p. 245). Friends are asked to be sensitive and compassionate to their friends' needs in times of distress and are even called upon to sacrifice altruistically personal needs for the sake of their friends. Sullivan believed that mature, intimate friendship involve a mutual form of love where partners reciprocally provide support to and seek support from one another.

Although Sullivan's (1953) framework (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986) provides a rich account of the development of same-sex friendships during early and middle adolescence, this perspective does not adequately address the transitional period from late adolescence to early adulthood (i.e. 17 to 25 years). In contrast, contemporary theorists have begun to address the developmental pathways of friendship through early adulthood (e.g. Carberry & Buhrmester, 1998; Johnson & Leslie, 1982), focusing on changes in friendship research based on existing approaches.

in the features and functions of friendship that parallel changes in social role involvement.

One notable perspective is Carberry and Buhrmester's (1998) *family role involvement* perspective. Unlike Sullivan's (1953) theory that focuses on chronological maturation, this perspective suggests that features and functions of friendships are integrally connected to the broader organization of adolescents' and young adults' networks of close relationships, including those with parents, romantic partners, and even their own children. According to this perspective, the transition from adolescence to young adulthood is a period of considerable change in the organization of social networks, which is reflected by individuals' participation in different relational roles. Thus, the nature and functional significance of friendships is better understood in relation to that of other significant relationships.

Borrowing ideas from sociological work (e.g., Fischer & Oliker, 1983), Carberry and Buhrmester's (1998) perspective considered three major phases of family role involvement that are likely to occur in the transitional period from late adolescence to young adulthood: (1) the single uncommitted phase, (2) the married-without-children phase, and (3) the married-with-young-children phase. They sought to explain how young adults' time and emotional investment in friendships, as well as the functional significance of their friendships, may vary depending on their involvement in other relational roles. According to this perspective, different family role commitments are likely to affect the amount of time and emotional energy available to invest in friendships, which in turn, influence the degree of interdependence and intimacy between friends. In addition, taking on new family roles (e.g., spouse, parent) can create new sources of support, thereby reducing the pragmatic necessity of friends for the fulfillment of intimacy needs (e.g., disclosure, support). Similar arguments have also been offered by Johnson and Leslie's (1982) *Dyadic Withdrawal* hypothesis such that when individuals become more involved in romantic relationships, less emotional and physical investment will be put into friendships. Taken together, these role involvement perspectives on friendships differ from Sullivan's (1953) developmental theory in two major ways. First, these perspectives do not have a rigid definition of development stages. Unlike Sullivan's definition of stages based on age differences, these perspectives emphasize shifts in different relational roles that may occur in the transition to young adulthood but at different times for different individuals.

Second, these perspectives emphasize the transformation of friendship in relation to other social networks, describing the roles of friends in relation to other significant social relationships.

### Individual Differences Approaches to Friendship Intimacy

Individual differences approaches focus on describing intimate friendship in terms of perceived intimacy and closeness, as well as the behavioral exchanges of disclosure and support that occur between friends (Chow & Buhrmester, in press; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Shulman, 1993). Attachment theory serves as the most prominent approach to describing individual differences in friendship intimacy (Furman & Wehner, 1994; Kerns, 1996). Friendship researchers utilize insights from traditional attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1982) in order to describe different orientations toward self disclosure and support-giving and how these orientations are systematically driven by relational views, or mental representations, that adolescent derive from past and current relationship experiences. For instance, Furman and Wehner (1994) argued that individual differences in self-disclosure and caregiving behaviors (e.g., compassion and responsiveness) that are expressed in friendships can be conceptualized by a classification system similar to the categorical system utilized by attachment researchers. More specifically, they suggest that these behaviors can be conceptualized in a manner similar to the secure, dismissing (avoidant), and preoccupied (ambivalent) attachment classifications of individuals denoted by attachment researchers. Adolescents with a secure orientation of friendships feel comfortable seeking comfort and support from friends in times of distress as caregivers, they are also expected to be more sensitive and responsive to their friends' needs. Adolescents with a dismissing orientation, in contrast will be uncomfortable with closeness and reluctant to seek for support from friends in times of distress; as caregivers, they are not sensitive to their friends' feelings and tend to be aloof and cold when their friends are in need of comfort or support. Finally, adolescents with a preoccupied orientation have an intense need for attachment and closeness; as caregivers, they tend to be emotionally overinvolved in their friends' distress.

Some theories further describe friendship intimacy by considering individual differences in self-disclosure and support that occur between friends at the dyadic level. For instance, Shulman (1993) drew on famil

systems theory and characterized friend dyads based on their closeness and intimacy. This approach views a dyadic friendship as a system that includes two interdependent individuals. Three types of friendship systems have been proposed: (1) *interdependent*, (2) *disengaged*, and (3) *enmeshed*. Interdependent friends are close to each other; however, although intimacy is emphasized in interdependent friendships, it is achieved without costing either friend their autonomy. Disengaged friends emphasize individuality; these friends prefer compulsive self-reliance and are unable to form collaborative and interdependent relationships with each other. Enmeshed friends overly emphasize intimacy and closeness; such tendencies lead friends to insist on each other's availability in all circumstances.

Through the integration of attachment theory and coping/support research (Furman & Wehner, 1994; Kunce & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer & Florian, 2001), another dyadic model of friendship has emerged. Chow and Buhrmester (in press) recently proposed the Coping-Support Interdependence Model (CSIM) for characterizing how young adult friend dyads jointly respond to stressful events. Much like Furman and Wehner's (1994) conceptualization, the CSIM has identified three prototypic ways of coping that are likely to occur between friends: (1) *distancing*, (2) *adaptive*, and (3) *overwhelmed*. The first prototypic way of coping involves a distancing pattern that focuses on controlling the primary appraisal of a stressor (through selective inattention, minimization, denial, suppression, distraction, and escape) in order to short-circuit the perception of threat. The second prototypic pattern of adaptive coping involves the realistic appraisal of stressors, problem-focused coping efforts, and a willingness to turn to partners for assistance in dealing with the problem and any accompanying emotional distress. The adaptive pattern is characterized by the sharing of emotions and the seeking of comfort, reassurance, sympathy, advice, and tangible assistance. Finally, the overwhelmed pattern involves intense and prolonged emotional experiences in response to stressful situations and a tendency to ruminate and self-blame. In response to a distressed friend, three prototypic ways of offering support are likely to occur: (1) *disengaged*, (2) *responsive*, and (3) *overinvolved*. The disengaged prototypic pattern is characterized by discomfort and disinterest in helping a partner and typically involves withdrawal, limited involvement, and the rejection of neediness. In contrast, the responsive prototypic support-giving pattern is characterized by empathetic sensitivity and by a willingness to provide comfort, reassurance, and affection. Finally, the overinvolved prototypic pattern is characterized

by a self-focused need for excessive involvement in the partner's problems and typically involves criticism, controlling behavior, overinvolvement, and enmeshment.

The important distinction between Furman and Wehner's (1994) conceptualization and the CSIM is that the latter emphasizes the behavior dependency of coping and support-giving between friends (Chow and Buhrmester, in press). This framework further characterizes friend dyads based on joint-coping exchanges. Specifically, the characterization of dyads in terms of their coping/support patterns yields a 3x3 matrix typology of dyadic pairings that capture the important patterns manifest in intimate friendships (see Figure 5.1). The vertical axis of Figure 5 describes Friend 1's prototypic coping at the individual level whereas the horizontal axis describes Friend 2's prototypic support at the individual level. The four quadrants of the matrix represent the following combinations of prototypic coping and prototypic support: (1) *distancing-disengaged*, (2) *adaptive-disengaged*, (3) *overwhelmed-disengaged*, and (4) *overwhelmed-overinvolved*. The distancing-disengaged pair occurs when one friend copes with stress by utilizing distancing strategies

Figure 5.1 Chow and Buhrmester's Coping-Support Interdependence Model (CSIM)

		Friend 2 Support-Giving		
		Disengaged	Responsive	Overinvolved
Friend 1 Coping	Distancing	<i>Distance</i> <b>Disengaged</b>	Distancing Responsive	<i>Distance</i> <b>Overinvolved</b>
	Adaptive	Adaptive Disengaged	<i>Adaptive</i> <b>Responsive</b>	Adaptive Overinvolved
	Overwhelmed	<i>Overwhelmed</i> <b>Disengaged</b>	Overwhelmed Responsive	<i>Overwhelmed</i> <b>Overinvolved</b>

SOURCE: Chow & Buhrmester (in press).

level. The combinations of both friends' behaviors constitute the dyad interdependent patterns of coping and support-giving, which are useful for characterizing intimate friendships in adolescence and young adulthood. Although nine combinations have been proposed, this model predicts that five major patterns of interaction are particularly prominent and frequent. The first three (shown in bold italics in Figure 5.1) are corresponding pairings: (1) *distancing-disengaged*, (2) *adaptive-respondive*, and (3) *overwhelmed-overinvolved*. The distancing-disengaged pair occurs when one friend copes with stress by utilizing distancing strategies

(e.g., denial, compulsive self-reliance) and their friend is rather aloof or uncaring in his/her support-giving. The adaptive–responsive pairing occurs when one friend copes with stress effectively through the use of problem solving strategies or social support-seeking and their friend reacts sensitively and supportively in his/her support-giving. The overinvolved–overinvolved pairing occurs when one friend is emotionally overinvolved and unable to cope constructively and their friend is also affected emotionally (empathic distress) and is unable to offer adequate support. Although these descriptions are of coping–support interactions, the dyadic dynamics are similar to Shulman's (1993) conceptualization of the disengaged, interdependent, and enmeshed typologies of friendships.

Chow and Buhrmester (in press) further proposed that there are *non-corresponding* dyadic friendship pairings. Two of these noncorresponding pairings, shown in bold in Figure 5.1, are of particular interest because, at least in theory, they represent incompatible demand–withdraw patterns of coping with stress (Christensen, 1988). The overwhelmed–disengaged pairing occurs when one person responds to stress by becoming overwhelmed (e.g., ruminating, excessive reassurance seeking) while their partner is disengaged in their support-giving (i.e., uncaring, detached); the pressing nature of the overwhelmed person's response may prove especially inconsistent with (or even aversive to) the disengaged partner's desire to avoid involvement, which might exacerbate his/her disengagement. The distancing–overinvolved pairing seems equally problematic. The stressed person's distancing style (e.g., denial, behavioral disengagement from stressors) seems evasive to the overinvolved partner, which may spurn the latter to heighten efforts to get the person to "face up to" the problem and deal with unexpressed feelings.

## ■■■ EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF FRIENDSHIP INTIMACY

### The Developmental Approach

#### *Research on Change in Friendship in Early and Mid-Adolescence*

Most of the existing research on normative change in friendship during adolescence focuses on developmental changes in friendship intimacy—typically assessed with changes in disclosure and support—that occur with

age. Research on development in early and mid-adolescent friendship appears to be relatively consistent, suggesting that mutuality, self-disclosure and intimacy increase markedly during adolescence (e.g., Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1992; Poulin & Pedersen, 2007). Not only do adolescent disclose more to and become more dependent on their friends for support but they also become more supportive of their friends. The overall perceived quality of friendship also improves from early to mid-adolescence (Way & Greene, 2006). These findings support Sullivan's (1953) notion that adolescents begin to utilize friendships as a means to fulfill their needs for intimate exchange and that friendships provide an ideal context for the intimate exchange of self-disclosure, support, and validation.

#### *Research on Change in Friendship in Late Adolescence and Young Adulthood*

Whereas the research on friendship development during early and mid-adolescence appears to be relatively consistent, the research on friendship in late adolescence and early adulthood seems to be mixed. For instance some studies indicate that late adolescents and young adults engage in more self-disclosure (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006), become more supportive (De Goede et al., 2009), and experience more intimacy in their friendships (Reis, Lin, Bennett, & Nezlek, 1993) compared to their younger counterparts. Other studies, however, suggest that intimacy (Updegraff, McHale, & Crouter, 2002), as well as commitment and satisfaction (Oswald & Clark, 2003) in friendships, decreases during the transition to late adolescence. Borrowing ideas from Carberry and Buhrmester (1998), there are two possible reasons for this discrepancy in the literature. First, friendship is typically studied in isolation from other types of relationships (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009; Poulin & Pedersen, 2007; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). Thus, findings typically offer limited insight into how young adults' friendships change when additional social roles (e.g., involvement in a romantic relationship) become more prominent. Second, life stages are often loosely defined in terms of chronological maturation rather than by shifts in social role participation, which may not coincide perfectly with age. Thus, these studies may fail to detect the consistent patterns of change in friendships in late adolescence and young adulthood. In other words, what might be perceived as inconsistency in the literature may just be a failure to detect how other relationships (e.g., romantic relationships) differentially affect intimacy

support, disclosure, and satisfaction in friendships depending upon the extent to which an individual is involved in these other relationships.

In order to address the possibility that friendship development is dependent upon individuals' involvement in other relationships, contemporary researchers have argued that a broader social network of relationships should be considered, in order to better understand friendship development in late adolescence and young adulthood (e.g., Carberry and Buhrmester, 1998; Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Laursen & Williams, 1997; Meeus, Branje, van der Valk, & de Wied, 2007). Because both friendships and romantic relationships are generally thought of as the most prominent relationships during late adolescence and young adulthood (e.g., Collins & Madsen, 2006), a handful of studies have addressed the nature of friendships in adolescence in relation to the nature of concurrent romantic relationships (Carberry & Buhrmester, 1998; Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Laursen & Williams, 1997; Reis et al., 1993; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). Overall, these studies suggest that when late adolescents and young adults become involved in romantic roles, the necessity of friends for the fulfillment of intimacy needs is lessened, and romantic partners emerge as the major figure of intimacy. For example, adolescents with romantic partners spend significantly less time with family and friends than adolescents without romantic relationships (Laursen & Williams, 1997). Additionally, upon entering young adulthood, the proportion of individuals who choose romantic partners as their closest friends nearly doubles, whereas the proportion of participants who choose nonromantic friends as their closest friends significantly declines (Pahl & Pevalin, 2005). Late adolescents and young adults also rate intimacy with romantic partners as significantly higher than intimacy with friends (Salas & Ketzenberger, 2004), emotional closeness in romantic relationships as more important than in friendships (Furman, Flannagan, & Matamoros, 2009), and relational commitment as stronger in romantic relationships than friendships (Meeus et al., 2007). Late adolescents and young adults also mention intimacy and support more often as rewards of romantic relationships than of friendships (Hand & Furman, 2009) and report that they are more likely to utilize a romantic partner or parent as an attachment figure (i.e., a person whom they can seek comfort in when distressed, count on always, and see and talk to regularly) than they are a best friend (Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997). In general, these findings suggest that as late adolescents and young adults become involved in romantic relationships, they become less involved and intimate with

friends, possibly because they are fulfilling their needs for intimacy with their romantic partners and because they now have less time to spend with friends.

Surprisingly, some studies suggest that romantic involvement in itself has little impact on friendship quality (e.g., Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Reis et al., 1993). For instance, Connolly and Johnson (1996) found that late adolescents do not differ in the amount of social support received from their best friend depending on whether they are romantically involved or not. Similarly, Reis et al. (1993) found that married an single adults do not differ in their perception of friendship intimacy. These inconsistent findings may be attributable to the fact that the classifications of "involved" versus "not involved" may oversimplify the conceptualization of romantic status; instead, degree of involvement in a romantic relationship (e.g., duration, commitment) may be more indicative of changes in friendship intimacy (Johnson & Leslie, 1982). For example, a study examining the association between different levels of romantic involvement (e.g., from casual dating to marriage) and friendship qualities found that when compared to less romantically committed young adults (e.g., casual daters), young adults who were highly committed to their partner (e.g., married) perceived of existing friendships as less important, and disclosed less to friends about personal matters (Johnson & Leslie, 1982). These findings suggest that as adolescents and young adults become more involved and committed in their romantic relationships, they become less intimate in their friendship because their romantic involvement begins to take the place of their friendship involvement.

Studies that focus on the stage of young adulthood in which individuals get married and begin to have children are also supportive of the *family role involvement* perspective (Carberry & Buhrmester, 1998) in that they suggest that as individuals begin to have children with their spouses, friendships decrease in number and importance. For instance, from the period of pregnancy to postpartum, women report a decrease in the number of friends and an increase in the number of family members in their primary social network; they also rate their emotional and instrumental support from friends as lower and their support from family as higher (Gameiro, Boivin, Canavarro, Moura, Ramos, & Soares, 2010). Similarly, new parents report a decline in their number of friends after the birth of a child, and they report spending more time with family members and spouses (Boost, Cox Burchinal, & Payne, 2002). These findings may be due to a change in

relational needs in that new parents may need help and advice raising their child, which may be more available from their spouses, parents, and other family members (Gameiro et al., 2010). Additionally, as individuals have children, they experience a change in the number of roles that they must take on as new parents, which may prohibit them from maintaining friendships to the same extent and number as before they had children (Carberry & Buhrmester, 1998). These findings are supportive of the notion that as young adults enter into marriage and early parenthood, their social networks undergo an important reorganization because their new responsibilities as spouses and parents leave them less time for friendship. Additionally, friendships have less to offer these young adults in terms of support for dealing with emotional stressors that accompany marriage and parenthood or in terms of relational intimacy, which can now be found by confiding in their spouse.

### The Individual Differences Approach

#### Attachment Styles and Individual Differences in Friendship Intimacy

Attachment research typically focuses on adolescents' and young adults' perceptions of their friendship intimacy, which is often defined by levels of disclosure and social support. According to attachment theory, highly anxious individuals are preoccupied by needs for intimacy; such tendencies lead them to perceive friends as less supportive and to perceive their relationships as less intimate (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Existing studies on adolescents' and young adults' friendships, however, have provided mixed findings for this proposition. Whereas some researchers find that attachment anxiety is associated with perceptions of lower relationship intimacy or closeness (Bauminger, Finzi-Dottan, Chason, & Har-Even, 2008), others have failed to find such an association (Fraley & Davis, 1997; Furman, 2001; You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). One possible explanation for these mixed findings is that individuals who are high in attachment anxiety hold complex views of their partner (Mikulincer, Shaver, Bar-On, & Ein-Dor, 2010). On the one hand, anxiously attached individuals may perceive that their partner hardly meets their intense desires for proximity, and this lack of fulfillment leads them to perceive of their relationship as less close and intimate. On the other hand, anxiously

attached individuals also tend to focus on the potential rewards of intimacy and, thus, hold positive and hopeful attitudes toward their relationships. Therefore, these conflicting relational views and attitudes, *relational ambivalence*, toward partners quite possibly explain the mixed findings in the literature.

In contrast to preoccupied individuals, avoidant individuals tend to feel uneasy with intimate relationships and actively suppress their need for support or comfort from their attachment figure, placing emphasis on independence and interpersonal distance (Furman & Wehner, 1994). Some report studies that have examined the association between attachment avoidance and intimacy in friendship suggest that adolescents who possess avoidant internal working models of friendships (as opposed to secure working models of friendship) tend to describe their friends' experiences as less warm and supportive and feel less intimate with their best friend (Bauminger et al., 2008; Furman, 2001; Zimmermann, 2010). Results from a longitudinal study examining adolescents from Grade 9 to Grade 12 further suggest that avoidant attachment and friends intimacy are reciprocally related (Chow, Roelse, & Buhrmester, 2011). Specifically, avoidant attachment is predictive of subsequent friends intimacy whereas friendship intimacy is also predictive of the emergence of avoidant attachment.

#### Characterizing Friend Dyads by Individual Differences in Friendship Intimacy

Contemporary researchers have argued that it is important to consider friendship intimacy at the dyadic level. Emphasizing interdependence friendships, this line of research focuses on characterizing friendships based on the intimate exchanges that occur within the dyad. For instance, borrowing ideas from family systems theory, Shulman (1993) suggests that there are three major types of adolescent friendships: (1) *disengaged*, (2) *interdependent*, and (3) *enmeshed*. In order to investigate this assumption, studies have observed adolescents' behavioral interactions during a problem solving task, examining the extent to which the proposed dyad friendship types manifest themselves behaviorally (Shulman, 1993; Shulman, Larsen, Kalman, & Karpovsky, 1997). Partially supporting Shulman's hypothesis, two major types have emerged: (1) *interdependent* and (2) *disengaged*. Interdependent dyads are characterized by high levels of coordination and joint effort when engaging in the problem-solving task.

In contrast, disengaged dyads are characterized by high levels of individuality and a lack of coordination, even when they have been explicitly encouraged to consult with each other (Shulman, 1993; Shulman et al., 1997). These two types of friendship can be further distinguishable by their concepts of intimacy. Specifically, when compared to disengaged dyads, interdependent dyads' concepts of intimacy involve a better balance of closeness and individuality (Shulman, 1993), as well as higher levels of emotional closeness and respect (Shulman et al., 1997). Overall, these observational studies suggest that interdependent friendships that are characterized by joint effort and closeness as well as disengaged friendships that are characterized by individuality and a lack of coordination can both be found in adolescence.

Although the enmeshed friendship type did not emerge in Shulman's studies (1993, Shulman et al., 1997), another line of friendship research has provided tentative support for this typology. Specifically, Rose (2002) observed a tendency for co-rumination between some friends. This co-rumination can be conceptualized as a dyadic phenomenon in which friends extensively discuss and revisit their problems, with a focus on their negative feelings. Co-rumination appears to resemble the features of enmeshed friendship described by Shulman's (1993) theory. Because Shulman (1993; Shulman et al., 1997) assessed friendship typologies with a problem-solving task, it is possible that the nature of this task may not have been "emotionally driven" enough to capture enmeshed friendship, which involves excessive levels of emotional intimacy.

Attachment researchers also examined different pairings of friendships based on their attachment styles and how these different pairings are reflective of friendship intimacy. For instance, using a categorical approach for measuring attachment styles, Weintraub, Kerns, and Oldenbourg (2004) identified three types of friendship pairings based on the attachment styles of the individuals in a friendship: (1) secure-secure, (2) secure-insecure, and (3) insecure-insecure. They examined the extent to which these different pairings differed in terms of their closeness and their intimate behavioral exchanges. They found that the three pairings did not differ in terms of their self-reported friendship closeness. However, when compared to dyads in which one or both of the friends were insecure, the secure-secure dyads tended to display more behaviors that are likely to promote a sense of connection within the friendship, such as higher levels of intimate disclosure and supportiveness, as well as lower levels of superficial disclosure when engaging in discussions. A study assessing attachment styles through the use of two attachment dimensions

(avoidance and anxiety) found similar results (Grabill & Kerns, 2000). Specifically, dyads in which both friends were high in attachment avoidance reported lower self-disclosure in their friendship; individuals within this type of dyad reported feeling as though they were not validated or supported by their friend. Contrary, dyads in which both friends were high in attachment anxiety reported greater self-disclosure than dyads not as high in attachment anxiety. Taken together, this body of literature suggests that the different pairings of attachment styles present in friend dyads may have important effects on the intimacy and closeness in these friendships.

A separate line of research also discusses the dynamics of intimate behavioral exchanges between friends, focusing on the interdependence of self-disclosure as well as support-seeking and support-giving in close friendships. For instance, Chow and Buhrmester (in press) examined the interdependence of coping and support among young adult friends. This study found a strong association between the extent to which one friend sought emotional/instrumental support and the extent to which the other friend responded with sensitive support. Consistent with Reis and Shaver's (1988) intimacy model, this study suggests that individuals who routinely experience sensitive and responsive support from friends are more confident about their friends' availability and are, therefore, more comfortable relying on them for instrumental and emotional support.

Interestingly, Chow and Buhrmester (in press) also found a positive association between individuals' distancing coping and their friends' disengaged support-giving. These findings suggest that the avoidance of support-givers in times of distress is an emotion regulation strategy (i.e., compulsive self-reliance and suppression of attachment needs) used to cope with an uncaring/unsupported friend. It is equally possible, however, that when an individual copes with stress by denying or dismissing the importance of the stressor, his/her avoidance puts little direct impetus on the partner to provide a supportive response. That is, if the friend does not want to acknowledge that he/she has a problem, the partner is, to an extent, implicitly asked not to offer support. Thus, it is equally possible that a person's distancing coping may cause their friend to react with disengagement or that a friend's disengaged support-giving may cause an individual to utilize avoidance as a coping strategy.

Chow and Buhrmester's (in press) study also provides insight into another type of coping-support dynamic: the overwhelmed-overinvolved pairing. This pattern closely resembles the enmeshed pattern of friendship (Shulman, 1993) as well as the co-rumination dynamics Rose (2002)

observed in friendships (especially those of females). Interestingly, Chow and Buhrmester (in press) found that overwhelmed coping was associated with disengaged support-giving behaviors. One possible interpretation of this finding involves the evolving process of coping and support-giving between friends. That is, when faced with a friend who is overwhelmed and not readily consoled, a friend may sequentially engage in more than one way of providing support. For instance, the friend may begin by offering support, but once they realize that the friend is unreceptive to the support, they may disengage.

Empirical studies that investigate individual differences in friendship intimacy using a dyadic approach suggest it is important to consider the characteristics and roles of both individuals involved in the friendship. For instance, although traditional research has consistently found an individual-level link between attachment security and friendship intimacy (Furman, 2001), more recent research also suggests that it is crucial to consider how different pairings of attachment security between friends may have an impact on perceptions of intimacy within the dyad (Weimer et al., 2004). Furthermore, research also suggests that individual differences in the expression of intimate behaviors (e.g., disclosure, support) are heavily dependent on another's friend's characteristics (Chow & Buhrmester, in press), arguing that friendship intimacy is established by the intimate behavioral exchanges between two friends.

## ■ FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Research from the developmental and individual differences perspectives of friendship development has revealed important features of friend relations in adolescence and young adulthood, but to understand real transformations in this developmental period, more work is needed on the time course of friendships, both chronologically and developmentally. Illuminating these transformations will require an integration of the developmental and individual differences perspectives.

Understanding the course that friendships take in real, chronological time requires knowledge of where, when, and how individuals find friends. As emerging adults move beyond compulsory schooling and are no longer forced into daily interaction with large numbers of peers, how do young adults initiate friendships? Where do they find friends, and what strategies do they use to initiate contact with new potential

friends? In addition to these questions, future research should examine the different types of social overtures that might be effective in initiating and strengthening friendships. Similarly, research should consider the different interactional processes that contribute to the strength and satisfaction of dyadic friendships, as well as the strategies that young adults use to offer support and companionship to friends as the commitments to marriage and parenthood make daily contact with friends less likely. Another interesting perspective on friendships that has not been extensively considered is the manner in which adolescent and young adult friendships come to an end. Do serious conflicts erupt that cause friends to "break up" as at earlier ages, or do problematic friendships in young adulthood slowly degrade and eventually break apart with time?

Future work should also examine transformations in relationship processes that occur developmentally. As individuals mature into young adulthood, are they more likely to have the capacity for interdependent friendships as opposed to enmeshed or disengaged relationships? Do young adults learn from their experiences in friend relationships and become more likely to engage in solve and solace type interactions when in distress, as opposed to dismiss or escape interactions? In light of Chow and Buhrmester's (in press) model, as a result of maturation, increased skill in emotion regulation, and experience in relationships, it seems quite plausible that young adults would become more likely to engage in adaptive coping with friends as they mature, as opposed to distancing or overwhelmed coping.

We concur with Carbary and Buhrmester (1998) that studying age differences in young adult friendships may be far less revealing than studying friendships in relation to other close relationships that accompany the major transition points in early adulthood, such as marriage and becoming a parent. Adults' friendships likely continue to evolve as the transitions continue. For individuals who become parents, children's changing social ecologies likely influence parents' relationships, as children begin school and bring their parents into contact with new networks, as older children become intensely involved in extracurricular activities, and as older adolescent children move away from home and parents find renewed energy and more time for friendships. Additionally, almost all adults experience transformations in relationships related to employment; new social challenges arise from moving to a new community to start a new job, being promoted and being asked to supervise peers, and losing a job.

Developmental psychopathologists studying risk and resilience have argued that for children resilience may be fostered by the "ordinary" magic of adaptive relationships (Masten, 2001). Friendships for young adults may be part of the ordinary magic that allows some to thrive in the face of adversity; these relationships may also be a source of pleasurable companionship and support. However, it is important to remember that the ordinary magic of friend relationships is not available to everyone. Both the developmental and individual differences theories seek to account for characteristics of existing friendships. Additional theoretical and empirical work will be important for understanding how exactly adolescents and young adults form and strengthen friendships, how friendships sometimes dissolve, and how young adults create the ordinary magic of friend relationships through the major transitions of adulthood.

## ■ SUGGESTED READINGS

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1986). The changing functions of children's friendships: A neo-Sullivanian perspective. In V. Derlega & B. Winstead (Eds.), *Friendships and social interaction* (pp. 41-62). New York: Springer.

Carberry, J., & Buhrmester, D. (1998). Friendship and need fulfillment during three phases of young adulthood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(3), 393-409.

Chow, C. M., & Buhrmester, D. (in press). Interdependent patterns of coping and support among close friends. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(3), 393-409.

Chow, C. M., Roelse, H. B., & Buhrmester, D. (2010). *Reciprocal associations between attachment security and friendship intimacy and exclusion during adolescence*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Christensen, A. (1988). Dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 31-52). Clevedon, Avon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Collins, W. A., & Madson, S. D. (2006). Personal relationships in adolescence and early adulthood. In D. Perlman & A. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 191-209). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Connolly, J., & Johnson, A. (1996). Adolescents' romantic relationships and the structure and quality of their close interpersonal ties. *Personal Relationships*, 3(2), 185-195.

De Goede, I., Branje, S., & Meeus, W. (2009). Developmental changes and gender differences in adolescents' perceptions of friendships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(5), 1105-1123.

Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: A prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 265-284.

Fischer, C. S., & Oliker, S. J. (1983). A research note on friendship, gender, and the life cycle. *Social Forces*, 62, 124-133.

Fraley, R., & Davis, K. (1997). Attachment formation and transfer in young adults' close friendships and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 4, 131-144.

Fraley, R., & Shaver, P. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 4, 132-154.

Friedlander, L., Reid, G., Shupak, N., & Cribbie, R. (2007). Social support, self-esteem, and stressor as predictors of adjustment to university among first-year undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 259-274.

Furman, R., Flanagan, D., & Matamoros, M. (2009). Behavior expectations in cross-sex friendships, same-sex friendships, and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 16(4), 575-595.

Furman, W. (2001). Working models of friendships. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 18(5), 583.

Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development*, 63(1), 103-115.

Berndt, T. (1982). The features and effects of friendship in early adolescence. *Child Development*, 53(6), 1447.

Bost, K., Cox, M., Burchinal, M., & Payne, C. (2002). Structural and supportive changes in couples' family and friendship networks across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 64(2), 517-531.

Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1986). The changing functions of children's friendships: A neo-Sullivanian perspective. In V. Derlega & B. Winstead (Eds.), *Friendships and social interaction* (pp. 41-62). New York: Springer.

Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1987). The development of companionship and intimacy. *Child Development*, 58(4), 1101-1113.

Carberry, J., & Buhrmester, D. (1998). Friendship and need fulfillment during three phases of young adulthood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(3), 393-409.

Chow, C. M., & Buhrmester, D. (in press). Interdependent patterns of coping and support among close friends. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

Chow, C. M., Roelse, H. B., & Buhrmester, D. (2010). *Reciprocal associations between attachment security and friendship intimacy and exclusion during adolescence*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Christensen, A. (1988). Dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 31-52). Clevedon, Avon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Collins, W. A., & Madson, S. D. (2006). Personal relationships in adolescence and early adulthood. In D. Perlman & A. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 191-209). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Connolly, J., & Johnson, A. (1996). Adolescents' romantic relationships and the structure and quality of their close interpersonal ties. *Personal Relationships*, 3(2), 185-195.

De Goede, I., Branje, S., & Meeus, W. (2009). Developmental changes and gender differences in adolescents' perceptions of friendships. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(5), 1105-1123.

Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: A prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 265-284.

Fischer, C. S., & Oliker, S. J. (1983). A research note on friendship, gender, and the life cycle. *Social Forces*, 62, 124-133.

Fraley, R., & Davis, K. (1997). Attachment formation and transfer in young adults' close friendships and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 4, 131-144.

Fraley, R., & Shaver, P. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 4, 132-154.

Friedlander, L., Reid, G., Shupak, N., & Cribbie, R. (2007). Social support, self-esteem, and stressor as predictors of adjustment to university among first-year undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 259-274.

Furman, R., Flanagan, D., & Matamoros, M. (2009). Behavior expectations in cross-sex friendships, same-sex friendships, and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 16(4), 575-595.

Furman, W. (2001). Working models of friendships. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 18(5), 583.

Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development*, 63(1), 103-115.

Furman, W., & Wehner, E. A. (1994). Romantic views: Toward a theory of adolescent romantic relationships. In R. Montemayor, G. R. Adams, & G. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Advances in adolescent development: Volume 6. Relationships during adolescence* (pp. 168-195). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ganmeiro, S., Boivin, J., Canavarro, M., & Soares, I. (2010). Social nesting: Changes in social network and support across the transition to parenthood in couples that conceived spontaneously or through assisted reproductive technologies. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(2), 175-187.

Grabil, C., & Kerns, K. (2000). Attachment style and intimacy in friendship. *Personal Relationships*, 7(4), 363-378.

Hand, L. S., & Furman, W. (2009). Rewards and costs in adolescent other-sex friendships: Comparisons to same-sex friendships and romantic relationships. *Social Development*, 18(2), 270-287.

Johnson, M., & Leslie, L. (1982). Couple involvement and network structure: A test of the dyadic withdrawal hypothesis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 45(1), 34-43.

Kerns, K. A. (1996). Individual differences in friendship quality: Links to child-mother attachment. In W. M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb, & W. W. Hartup (Eds.), *The company they keep: Friendship in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 137-157). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kunce, L. J., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). An attachment-theoretical approach to caregiving in romantic relationships. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships: Vol 5. Attachment processes in adulthood* (pp. 205-237). London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Laursen, B., & Williams, V. A. (1997). Perceptions of interdependence and closeness in family and peer relationships among adolescents with and without romantic partners. In S. Shulman & W. A. Collins (Eds.), *Romantic relationships in adolescence: Developmental perspectives* (pp. 3-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.

Meus, W., Branje, S., van der Valk, I., & de Wied, M. (2007). Relationships with intimate partner, best friend, and parents in adolescence and early adulthood: A study of the saliency of the intimate partnership. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 31(6), 569-580.

Mikulincer, M., & Florian, V. (2001). Attachment style and affect regulation: Implications for coping with stressor and mental health. In G. J. O. Fletcher & M. S. Clark (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Interpersonal processes* (pp. 537-557). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P., Bar-On, N., & Ein-Dor, T. (2010). The pushes and pulls of close relationships: Attachment insecurities and relational ambivalence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 450-468.

Oswald, D., & Clark, E. (2003). Best friends forever? High school best friendships and the transition to college. *Personal Relationships*, 10(2), 187-196.

Pahl, R., & Pevlina, D. (2005). Between family and friends: A longitudinal study of friendship choice. *British Journal of Sociology*, 56(3), 433-450.

Poulin, F., & Pedersen, S. (2007). Developmental changes in gender composition of friendship networks in adolescent girls and boys. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1484-1496.

Radmacher, K., & Azmitia, M. (2006). Are there gendered pathways to intimacy in emerging adolescents' and emerging adults' friendships? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 21, 415-448.

Reis, H., Lin, Y., Bennett, M., & Nezlek, J. (1993). Change and consistency in social participation during early adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 29(4), 633-645.

Reis, H., & Shaver, P. R. (1988). Intimacy as an interpersonal process. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of research in personal relationships* (pp. 367-399). London, UK: Wiley.

Rose, A. J. (2002). Co-rumination in the friendships of girls and boys. *Child Development*, 73, 1830-1843.

Salas, D., & Ketznerberger, K. (2004). Associations of sex and type of relationship on intimacy. *Psychological Reports*, 94(3), 1322-1324.

Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2003). Testing theories of romantic development from adolescence to young adulthood: Evidence of a developmental sequence. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 27, 519-531.

Shulman, S. (1993). Close friendships in early and middle adolescence: Typology and friendship reasoning. *Close friendships in adolescence* (pp. 55-71). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shulman, S., Laursen, B., Kalman, Z., & Karovskiy, S. (1997). Adolescent intimacy revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26(5), 597-617.

Smetana, J. G., Campione-Barr, N., & Metzger, A. (2006). Adolescent development in personal and societal contexts. In *Annual Review of Psychology* (Vol. 57, pp. 255-288). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Review Press.

Sullivan, H. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.

Thinke, S., & Bartholomew, K. (1997). Hierarchies of attachment relationships in young adulthood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 14(5), 603-625.

Updegraff, K., McHale, S., & Crouter, A. (2002). Adolescents' sibling relationship & friendship experiences: Developmental patterns and relationship linkages. *Social Development*, 11(2), 182-204.

Way, N., & Greene, M. (2006). Trajectories of perceived friendship quality during adolescence: The patterns and contextual predictors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16(2), 293-320.

Weimer, B., Kerns, K., & Oldenburg, C. (2004). Adolescents' interactions with a best friend: Associations with attachment style. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 88, 102-120.

You, H., & Malley-Morrison, K. (2000). Young adult attachment styles and intimate relationships with close friends: A cross-cultural study of Koreans and Caucasian Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31(4), 528-534.

Youniss, J. (1980). *Parents and peers in social development*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zimmermann, P. (2004). Attachment representations and characteristics of friendship relations during adolescence. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 88(1), 83.