

INFLUENCES OF CURRENT PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS ON  
YOUNG ADULTS' ROMANTIC DEVELOPMENT

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In this study, the supportive nature of the parent-child relationship was examined for how it relates to young adults' romantic development, as measured by indicators of attachment relationship importance and romantic involvement. Attachment and social support theories suggest that parents continue to play an important role as their young adult children form romantic relationships. Prior research has indicated that perceived support from parents is positively related to young adults' expressing attachment relationship importance, as evidenced by attachment motivation and engaging in exploration about romantic relationship topics. Furthermore, support from parents has been negatively related to romantic and sexual involvement. Therefore, it was believed that support in the parent-child relationship would predict both the indicators of attachment relationship importance and the indicators of romantic involvement in the present study. Additionally, an interaction of parental support and participants' gender was expected for the indicators of attachment relationship importance but not romantic involvement. A sample of 157 women and 144 men, ages 18-22 completed questionnaires. These measures assessed the supportive quality of relationships with each parent and indicators of the young adults' romantic development. For the indicators of attachment relationship importance, results indicated that exploration was predicted by gender and a conflictual relationship with father while motivation was predicted by a supportive relationship with father. Regarding the indicators of romantic involvement, sexual involvement was predicted by gender. Given these unexpected results, the role of parental support in young adults' romantic development continues to appear important, though the nature of its influence needs further research. Theoretical and methodological issues were discussed in light of these findings.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore how supportive aspects of the parent-child relationship were related to the indicators of young adults' romantic development, specifically their involvement in and the perceived importance of attachment relationships. Scholarly work and popular thinking support the idea that children learn about relationships from the family, especially their primary caregivers. For instance, children who experience close, supportive relationships with their parents are believed to form similar relationships as adults in their own families. At least in part, children learn how relationships work and form expectations for others from their experiences of relationships in the family.

Attachment theory suggests the parent-child bond serves as a basis for other relationships (Bowlby, 1969). In cases where this parent-child bond is supportive, the child can feel secure in exploring and discovering the environment. When the child does not feel supported by parents, the usual progression of development may be altered, and the child may engage in much more or much less exploration. The attachment between child and parent is thought to continue being influential as the child grows into an adult (Ainsworth, 1989). Much research has focused on the attachment between the young child and parent, but more recent studies have examined the relationship when the child is an adult. It is believed that parents' relationships with their children continue to be an important source of support as children grow into adulthood.

Social support theory, along with attachment theory, provides a framework for understanding the importance of parents in their adult children's lives. In adolescence and young adulthood, the importance of support is equally strong for relationships with friends, romantic partners, and parents (Weiss, 1986). Especially in times of adapting to stress, parents are perceived as support providers "in reserve" (Weiss, 1974). Therefore, it appears the parent-child

relationship continues to be influential, as the child becomes an adolescent or young adult who may be exploring romantic relationships.

Romantic development is a primary task of adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson, 1959). Although this idea is fairly established in the literature, the definition of romantic development is often broad, and can vary depending upon the researcher's focus. For instance, some theorists have addressed this development by describing young adults engaging in more romantic behaviors, thinking more often about relationships and potential partners, noticing a physiological arousal, and following an instinctual or evolutionary drive (Carroll & Wolpe, 1996). In the present study, the focus for romantic development will be on young adults' involvement and importance in having attachment relationships. Researching the relationship and sexual behaviors engaged in and the motivation and exploration of romantic relationships may shed more light on the constructs of romantic involvement and importance of attachment relationships, respectively.

Young adults may form romantic relationships to meet attachment needs and establish other sources of support. Using the theories of attachment and social support, young adults' romantic development may take different forms, depending upon the quality of support they currently perceive from their parents. Young adults are likely to vary in whether they believe relationships with their parents are supportive or unsupportive. Furthermore, they are also likely to vary in their involvement and importance for romantic relationships.

The focus of the present study centered on the current supportive aspects of parent-child relationships and their contribution to romantic development during young adulthood.

Specifically, the parent-child attachment relationships were examined for their ability to predict involvement and importance of romantic relationships in young adult women and men. A lot of

research has been done from different perspectives on young adults' romantic development.

The goal for the present study was to extend the knowledge about attachment and social support believed to be involved in young adulthood.

### Supportive Aspects of the Parent-Child Relationship

From childhood through adulthood, parents are believed to be influential and important sources of support for their children. Though their roles and level of importance may shift as the child grows, parents frequently serve as a supportive base for the individual. The parent-child relationship has received much scholarly attention, through theories and empirical research. Though it has been examined from multiple perspectives, including developmental and social psychology, perhaps the most comprehensive frameworks for parent-child relationships and young adults' romantic development are attachment and social support theory. The contributions of these two theories will be addressed first.

#### Attachment Theory

Bowlby's early work (1969) on attachment theory emphasized the role of the parent-child bond. Bowlby identified the early bond between an infant and its primary caregiver, often the mother, as vital to sustaining a sense of security and support for the child. As the parent and young child interact, an "internal working model" is formed, which serves as a basis for future relationships. This model is the child's interpretation and understanding of how relationships work. For example, if the child feels her needs met by the primary caregiver or parents, she then feels safe in exploring others and the world around her. On the other hand, if a child does not feel her needs are met, the child may give up on this relationship and rely only on herself. Carried forward, the child is then believed to approach other relationships with a similar style for interacting.

Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) described three styles of attachment, or ways of interacting with others. A child with a secure style of attachment can separate from the caregiver and explore. In times of encountering stress, this child would seek out the caregiver for comforting, but with reassurance, feel secure in later returning to exploration. The avoidant child is not likely to seek out the caregiver when he or she is alone, exploring. Furthermore, this child then ignores a returning caregiver, not seeking comfort or support. With the third style, the ambivalent child, exploration is done tentatively. When faced with minimally stressful situations, this child seeks closeness to the caregiver.

Although attachment theory was originally conceptualized for infants' and young children's development, it has since been applied to adolescents and young adults (Ainsworth, 1985; 1989; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Sroufe and Waters hypothesized "continuity of adaptation," in which attachment relations were identified as vital to further adaptive functioning and mastery of the social world. Through longitudinal work (Elicker, England, & Sroufe, 1992), support was found linking secure early parent-child relationships with young children's effective social functioning. Ainsworth (1989) extended ideas of attachment theory into young adulthood. She has proposed that the attachment relationship between the child and adult continues to be important. However, the principal attachment figure for a young adult is more likely to be a romantic partner instead of a primary caregiver. Nevertheless, the original attachment figure is a source of support, especially during times of stress.

Kenny and colleagues (Kenny 1987a; 1987b; 1990; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991) suggest that the current attachment relationship between parents and their young adult children deserves more attention for its contributions to the young adults' development. They designed the Parental Attachment Questionnaire to examine young adults' relationships with their parents,



regarding the affective quality of the relationship, the parental role in providing emotional support, and the parents' fostering of autonomy in their young adult child.

Therefore, attachment theory provides a framework for understanding the influence of parent-child relationships on the child's development. For children and young adults, receptivity to others and the environment is considered encouraged by secure attachment and inhibited by insecure (avoidant or ambivalent) attachment. This has definite consequences for adolescents and young adults in terms of romantic development. Although the parents or primary caregiver serve as the attachment figure for children, a romantic partner may be more likely to serve in this role as development progresses to adulthood.

### Social Support Theory

Social support theory is also helpful in understanding parent-child relationships. This framework focuses on specific functions served by the parent-child relationship, and it uses a more present oriented view of parents' roles in the lives of their young adult children. From this theory, research has been conducted extensively on many different aspects of the total support network for an individual. However, for this study, the body of literature focused upon pertains to parents and romantic partners.

Weiss (1974) proposed that a balance of six basic provisions provides a supportive base for an individual. These provisions include: attachment (sense of security), social integration (sharing concerns and interests), opportunity for nurturance (responsibility for others), reassurance of worth (value as an individual), reliable alliance (provide support), and obtaining guidance (provide advice or information). Through further categorization, Weiss defined assistance-related (reliable alliance and obtaining guidance) and non-assistance-related (reassurance of worth, opportunity for nurturance, attachment, and social integration) provisions.

Researchers have hypothesized that different relationships provide different provisions for the individual (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Weiss, 1974). While a primary caregiver may serve as the source for attachment provisions, Weiss (1974) suggested that romantic partners might fulfill this function for individuals entering adulthood. The other provisions can be provided from other sources, such as opportunities for nurturance with children, reassurance of worth and reliable alliance from colleagues, and guidance from other friends and family members (Cutrona & Russell, 1987).

As proposed by earlier studies, more recent empirical work supports the notion of social support networks changing from childhood to adulthood (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992). A progressive shift of importance of social support is seen with parent-child relationships sharing strength with friendships and romantic relationships later in adolescence and young adulthood (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Suggested by Weiss (1986), children need to relinquish attachment to parents in order to form their own families. This sets the stage for forming other secure relationships beyond those with primary caregivers. However, Weiss maintains that the original attachments to caregivers remains important, especially in times of stress for young adults.

Therefore, social support theory strengthens the view that parents are important in their children's development—whether those children are infants or adults. This theory distinguishes between different dimensions of social support, which may influence various aspects of adjustment and functioning, identifies the functions served by relationships with parents during this period, and addresses the shifting of supportive functions from caregivers to other individuals of a support network. The focus on current functional aspects of parental support provides a means for understanding relationships between parents and their young adult children.

## Empirical Research

Attachment and social support theories provide strong support for the importance of parent-child bonds in childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, they provide a framework for understanding the empirical work investigating parent-child relationships, as they relate to individuals' later development. However, it should be noted that a variety of terminology has been used in discussing emotional aspects of these relationships. Pierce, Sarason, and Sarason (1991) have attempted to integrate the merits of various approaches in their Quality of Relationships Inventory, hoping to improve understanding in this area. Many of the studies presented in this literature review seem to address common factors of the parent-child relationship, even though they have used different terminology (i.e., warmth, closeness, support, secure attachment).

In addition, these studies have drawn conclusions regarding the parent-child relationship from using several different measurement methods. For example, retrospective accounts have been used (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), current assessments have been made through interviews (Kobak & Sceery, 1988), and in a few cases, longitudinal studies have linked parent-child attachment to other areas of functioning. It should also be recognized that the attachment perspective has branched into examining the attachment relationship between parents and children, and the attachment style in terms of relational style in adulthood. These are two different applications of attachment ideas. A review of the empirical studies pertaining to attachment and parent-child relationships provides an indication of how scholarly literature has addressed family influences on romantic development.

### *Attachment to Parents*

Kobak and Sceery (1988) used the Adult Attachment Interview (AII) with first-year college students to examine attachment style (secure, dismissing, and preoccupied), representing a recollection of the relationship with parent, and also assess current levels of support from parents. Overall, links were discovered between past and current parent-child relationships to current social competence. For example, the young adults with a secure style who reported current support from parents were identified as more interpersonally competent, especially in intimate dating situations. In contrast, individuals with an insecure style (dismissing or preoccupied) who reported a lack of current support from parents did not appear to be as comfortable or skilled in an interpersonal context.

Though focusing on recollections of early parent-child relationships, Collins and Read (1990) developed a dimensional view of attachment style that allows for evaluation of individual characteristics reflecting attachment needs and motivations. Even though their work does not shed light on the functions of current parent-child relationships, the researchers did tap into a motivational component of romantic development by examining individuals' comfort with closeness, extent of ability to depend upon others, and concerns or anxiety about being abandoned or unloved. In their study, they found individuals who reported a warm style of parenting during childhood reported more confidence in counting on others and less anxiety over abandonment. Individuals reporting cold or inconsistent parenting reported higher anxiety and lower dependency.

Rice (1990) performed a meta-analysis on adolescent attachment research. With the precautionary note that the studies in this analysis used different measures of attachment (some

current, others retrospective), the overall findings confirmed a link between parent-adolescent attachment and social competence, interpersonal functioning, and general life satisfaction.

More recently, Le Poire et al. (1997) examined individuals of heterosexual couples in their current attachment to parents. Furthermore, this study of adults aged 18-74 explored attachment styles to current romantic partners and partners' corresponding attachment styles. Securely attached partners, who reported secure current attachments to their parents, were also identified as having securely attached partners. Preoccupied partners, who reported an anxious-ambivalent current attachment to their parents, were paired with dismissively avoidant partners. Dismissively avoidant partners, who reported being caregivers to their parents rather than the reverse, were paired with preoccupied partners. This study sheds light on the importance of current parent-child relationships and how varying levels of support in those relationships are related to different patterns of romantic relationships.

These studies, examining current and past attachment relationships between parents and children, may provide clues to the links with later social development. However, most of the research has dealt with retrospective accounts. More information is needed to understand current parent-child relationships and their influence on young adults' romantic involvement and motivation.

### *Supportive Relationships with Parents*

Another group of studies focuses more on the current attachment relationship between parents and their young adult children and how it influences social development. In an early study of this nature, Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Feld, and Schoenrock (1985) examined a large sample of first year college students for the link between current closeness to family and a variety of measures addressing social competence. Using a canonical correlation for analysis, results

indicated an association between young adults reporting current closeness to their families and social competence, through measures of social self-esteem, instrumentality, expressiveness, and degree of satisfaction in same- and opposite-sex relationships. This suggests a link between family closeness and social development. However, it is difficult to determine how participants in the single item measure of this variable interpreted “closeness.” Nevertheless, exploring social competence and satisfaction in same- and opposite-sex relationships is beginning to address individual characteristics important to romantic development.

Kenny and colleagues have published many studies addressing current parent-child relationships’ influence on the development of college-aged adults. Using factor analysis, Kenny developed the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (PAQ) in 1990. For this questionnaire, three factors emerged. Quality of Relationship is known to tap the affective bond, Parental Fostering of Autonomy addresses encouragement of personal and functional independence, and Parental Role in Providing Emotional Support taps into consistent parental availability. Using 159 college seniors for participants, 84% from intact families, attachment to parents was positively and significantly related to social adjustment. In addition, attachment to parents was identified as stable between first and senior year. Contrasting from prior studies, attachment was not significantly related to dating competence and assertion, but was positively correlated to college planning. However, since the participants were seniors, the results suggest that attachment affects domains most salient to the individual at that period of time.

Kenny and Donaldson (1991) examined participants’ gender, parental attachment, and functional family structure with social competence. Participants were 226 college students, 77% from intact families and 23% whose parents were reported as separated, divorced, widowed, or never married. Canonical correlations were performed with the PAQ and its three attachment

dimensions. Only for females was the canonical correlation significant, with two roots identified. The first root was labeled maladaptive and was characterized by a range of family problems indicating a dysfunctional family environment. This family pattern was associated with a broad range of adjustment problems. The researchers suggest that a dysfunctional family environment is associated with broad effects on adjustment and perhaps development. The second root was labeled adaptive and appeared to focus on the supportive role of family relationships as promoters of social competence. Specific to attachment dimensions, results indicated that women who reported higher affective closeness to parents also reported a higher level of social competence. Overall, Kenny provides evidence for the benefits of examining current parent-child relationships as indicators of young adults' social development.

Campbell and Butcher (1993) focused more on college students' romantic relationships, by only including participants in such relationships. Using Weiss' functional aspects of support, results indicated that parents remain important to their young adult children, but they may serve narrower roles than previously. Again, highlighting the importance of measuring current parent-child relationships, parental relationship were most highly associated with being a Reliable Alliance, with lesser roles in being a figure for Attachment and Guidance. Romantic relationships were most highly related to Attachment. Both friends and romantic partners were seen as important sources of Attachment and Guidance. The researchers suggested there might be a shift in which parents are looked to for security, but that security is defined in functional rather than emotional terms as an attachment. Thus, it appears the parental role of providing support to the adolescent diminishes.

These studies identify the importance of examining specific aspects of the parent-child relationships and how support relates to social development. Although social competence of

young adults is explored, more research is needed on the involvement and motivational aspects of romantic development as they relate to current parent-child relationships.

### *Measuring Parental Support*

Research on parental support and whether it should be measured in general or separately by parent is mixed. Most studies have grouped parents together, using a single measurement of perceived support from mother and father. Studies that have noted differences in the mother-child relationship and father-child relationship have emphasized the mother's role as the primary caregiver.

Hartup (1989) reported mother-child relationships are perceived by children as more reciprocal, closer, and intimate than father-child relationships, although they are also perceived as more contentious. In examining college-aged students, a lack of closeness to fathers is often reported by female college students (Campbell & Butcher, 1993; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Quinn, 1995).

On the other hand, two measurements used to assess the qualitative aspects of the parent-adolescent relationship found no differences in attachment to parents. Armsden and Greenberg (1987) designed the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment to assess adolescents' trust and security for attachment figures to understand, respect, and respond to their needs, desires, concerns, and emotional states. Among the young adults who reported having lived with both parents most their lives, 51% reported having a very different relationship with their father than their mother. This lack of a significant difference between maternal and paternal attachment was identified by additional researchers (Lapsley, Rice, & Fitzgerald, 1990; Rice, Fitzgerald, Whaley, & Gibbs, 1998; Rice & Whaley, 1998) with the same instrument.



Furman and Buhrmester (1992) examined young adults' perceptions of networks of personal relationships using a revised version of their instrument Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI). This questionnaire assesses ten relationship qualities, including the seven provisions of support from Weiss' (1974) theory: reliable alliance, enhancement of worth, affection, companionship, instrumental help, intimacy, and nurturance of others. The three additional characteristics measured were conflict, punishment, and relative power between the child and parent. A total support score was reported for the seven provisions of support measured. Examining parents separately, fathers were not reported as a major source of support, whereas mothers were. However, more current research (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992) using the NRI with young adult males and females found both mothers and fathers perceived similarly, as very important sources of affection, instrumental aid, and reliable alliance.

In sum, this research is mixed, and a cautious future approach would be measuring the quality of support with each parent separately to be certain there are no empirical differences. Especially with this being an important component to understanding young adults' romantic development, the influence of support from mother and father should be measured separately, and later if deemed appropriate, could be combined into a general support measure.

#### *Gender and Perceptions of Parental Support*

From empirical research, there are reasons to believe adolescents and young adults may perceive support from their parents differently, according to gender. For example, such gender differences may be expected from socialization of acceptable male and female behaviors. Furthermore, cultural and biological differences may contribute to varying male and female perceptions.

Early research focused on preadolescent children. Maccoby (1980) found both boys and girls form strong attachments to both parents and derive security from their parents' presence. However, in studies that included slightly older children, girls were more likely to report receiving more affection (Bronfenbrenner, 1960; Droppleman & Schaefer, 1963; Hoffman & Salzstein, 1967; Siegelman, 1965). Since these studies did not include observations of parental behaviors, these differences may indicate selective perceptions of the children, or parental warmth may differ by gender but only after children reach school age (Maccoby, 1980).

Studies examining gender differences for adolescent and young adult children are mixed as well. McDermott et al. (1983) did not specifically assess the parent-child relationship, but it did examine boys' and girls' family values. Compared with boys, girls stood firmer for strong interrelationships and obligations within the family, affectional ties, and open expression of emotion. The authors suggest that girls find family and other relationships more important than boys.

Kenny and Donaldson (1991), using their three dimensions of attachment with college students, found young women described themselves as significantly more attached to their parents than young men. Identified in the prior section of this literature review, the dimensions assess affective quality of attachment, parental fostering of autonomy, and parental role in providing emotional support. In particular, the young women described the affective quality of their parental attachment as more positive and reported their parents as having a greater role in providing emotional support, in comparison with males. This is consistent with many other findings reporting women as closer and more attached to their families than are men (Kenny, 1987, 1990; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988; Troll & Bengston, 1979). However, Kenny and Donaldson (1991) went on to report that

women not only sought out parental support more frequently, but also the women who described themselves as more attached to parents reported higher levels of social competence and psychological well-being.

In finding mixed results in the research, some studies suggest males and females are more similar than different. Examining adolescents and young adults, some studies suggest that adolescent males and females are comparable in perceiving their parents as important sources of nurturance, counsel (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983) and attachment (Kenny, 1994).

However, the majority of research suggests the importance for examining males and females separately to check for gender differences in perceptions of parental support. Their values for family relationships and perceptions of affection and support may differ, which would alter their views of the parent-child relationship and its potential influence. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the genders separately when examining the influences of the parent-child relationship on romantic development.

### *Summary*

Empirical studies in the area of parent-child relationships during young adulthood often focus on results of early parent-child bonds, regarding an established attachment style in the children resulting from relationships with parents. This work is important to the current study as it supports parental influence on various aspects of development, and it indicates the importance of support in current parent-child relationships. Kenny's research has specifically investigated those current relationships as predictors of social development in young adulthood. However, further investigation of the current parent-child relationship as it influences young adults' romantic development is needed.

## Young Adults' Romantic Development

Forming intimate, romantic relationships is a central task to young adults' development (Erikson, 1959, 1968). However, the concept of romantic development is broad and may vary, depending upon the researcher's focus. Theoretical and empirical work in this area has investigated relationship satisfaction. More work is needed to examine the romantic involvement and importance of attachment relationships in young adults' romantic development, especially as they relate to relationships in the family.

Early theories laid the groundwork for more recent work in this area. For example, Erikson identified the task of intimacy development (1959), in which the young adult needs to establish him or herself as independent before having meaningful social relationships. Exploration and commitment to a romantic partner are key to forming one's identity and developing intimacy in young adulthood. Orlofsky and colleagues extended Erikson's theory to include five styles of dealing with intimate interpersonal relationships (Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). An individual's style depends upon the presence or absence of relationships with friends, members of the opposite sex, and level of involvement in the relationships. The five styles are: intimate (having the capacity to form close relationships and have done so), preintimate (ability to have close relationships, but not yet done), stereotyped (having same-sex friends without deep romantic involvement), pseudointimate (maintaining a romantic relationships that lacks the closeness of true intimacy), and isolate (any involvement with friends or romantic partners is on a superficial level). In addition, Sullivan (1953) emphasized an individual discovering his or her sexual identity and relating that to a romantic partner. For young adults, this means their task is to coordinate needs for security, intimacy, and lustful satisfaction. Then they can establish a network of relationships, including a committed romantic

relationship. These early theories address how romantic development might look. Additional research could shed more light on how young adults might negotiate this process.

### An Attachment Process

Beyond addressing parent-child relationships, attachment theory offers a framework for understanding romantic development. As described earlier, Bowlby (1969) proposed an “internal working model,” that an individual forms from the parent-child bond and carries forward to other relationships. Building off Bowlby’s work, Hazan and Shaver (1987) proposed that romantic love is an attachment process. In their research, they identified children’s attachment styles with their caregivers, and reported parallel attachment styles of these individuals as young adults with romantic partners. Rather than viewing the early phases of romantic involvement as attachments, they identify this process as “attaching.” In this sense, attaching behavior can indicate what an individual wants from a romantic relationship and the needs he or she is trying to address through involvement. The attachment perspective provides a framework for understanding involvement in dating behaviors and gaining insight into the motivations for seeking out romantic relationships.

Weiss (1986) also proposed a link between the early childhood attachment system and that of the adult. He purports the childhood system seems to fade before the adult system appears. The distinction between the two can be made regarding who provides support and protection. In the childhood system, the caregiver has a protector role. However in the adult system, mutual protection is more likely to occur and sexual desire emerges. For adults, Weiss found that attachment needs are more likely met through a long-term romantic partner (1974).

Furman and Wehner (1994, 1997) have also proposed a distinction between needs met, in this case between adolescents and adults. The researchers identified four systems involved in

romantic relationships: attachment, caregiving, sexual, and affiliative systems. For adolescents, romantic relationships meet the needs of the sexual and affiliation systems. The researchers suggest that especially in the case of the attachment system, caregivers are still meeting more of their needs than they would for adults. In adult romantic relationships, marital and long-term partners are key figures in meeting the needs inherent in all four systems. This perspective also implies that needs for children or adolescents are modified as the individual becomes an adult.

West (1994) has also addressed the ideas of romantic attachment by identifying attachment related and affiliation related functions of social relationships. In distinguishing these two functions, he suggests that needs for achieving security in a relationship through proximity to another person are met through attachment goals. This security component separates attachment functions from affiliative goals of relationships. Furthermore, affiliative functions are provided by friendships and romantic relationships, but attachment functions are more likely provided by romantic relationships for young adults. West's work is helpful in gaining insight into the motivations behind forming relationships.

The various perspectives on romantic attachment give way to expectations of behaviors that may reflect different attachment orientations (Furman & Wehner, 1994; 1997; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Weiss, 1986; West, 1994). Individuals with secure attachment styles would be expected to be available and responsive to a partner, be tolerant of separations without undue distress, and be able to independently explore relationships. On the other hand, individuals who are not secure in their attachment style would likely be anxious or avoidant regarding relationships, using manipulative, dependent, or completely avoidant behaviors. Exploring relational characteristics of attachment style supports continuity of the attachment perspective

and provides insight into the behaviors of attachment motivations. Therefore, by examining patterns of behaviors and ideas as individuals explore romantic relationships, indicators may be addressed that shed light on young adults' involvement and motivation with romantic relationships.

Attachment theory provides insight into the importance of relationships as they meet an individual's needs. Furthermore, there is support for examining the continuity of attachment behaviors, especially during the transitional period of early adulthood. According to theory, it appears that the evolving attachment system most affects dating and romantic behaviors as well as motivation and exploration of romantic development. These can be used as indications of young adults' involvement and importance of romantic relationships. However, the influence of parent-child relationships on these aspects of romantic relationships needs further examination.

#### Empirical Research

Research on romantic development has covered many changes that young adults encounter, such as new ways of behaving and thinking regarding a romantic partner. However, more research is needed that addresses the link between parent-child relationships and young adults' involvement and perceived importance of romantic relationships. Though a lot of work has been done on romantic development, this review will attempt to focus on work that sheds light on young adults' romantic behaviors, exploration, and motivation in romantic relationships and the corresponding influence of supportive relationships with parents. Within this body of literature, studies have examined early parent-child attachment style and later romantic development as well as adult attachment style and various aspects of romantic involvement and beliefs. Possibly due to the relative recency of empirical work in this area, studies appear to provide broad overviews of romantic development and utilize multiple outcome measures, often

blurring the distinction between process and satisfaction issues. In an effort to maintain focus for the present study, the empirical work was grouped according to the aspects of dating and romantic relationships addressed.

### *Needs Met by Dating*

Although this research has not accounted for the influence of the parent-child relationship, it does address the functions served by dating and romantic relationships for adolescents and young adults. This research is briefly reviewed, because it suggests that beyond emotional needs, many functions are served through romantic relationships, thus motivating the initiation and maintenance of them.

Roscoe, Diana, and Brooks (1987) examined adolescents' reasons for selecting a romantic partner. Overall, they found that with increasing age through adolescence, there are increased strivings for intimacy. Among gender differences, males were more likely to report sexuality as a reason for dating, while females reported intimacy as a primary objective. Along with other studies cited in this literature review, this study suggests a developmental view in which motivations for intimacy increase with age.

Berti Ceroni et al. (1987, as cited in Zani, 1993) researched the reasons for finding a romantic partner among Italian adolescents, ages 15 to 18. Those who were older were more motivated to find a partner. They viewed a partner as facilitating the process of separation from parents and serving as someone for sharing intimate feelings. Although the researchers did not directly examine relationships to parents, this research appears to support views that late adolescents may shift supportive functions of relationships with parents to a romantic partner.

Sheldon and West (1987) and West (1994) researched the attachment and affiliative functions performed by social relationships for college students. Attachment functions included



permanent relationship, sexual intimacy, a sense of security, fearing the loss of this person, and seeking him or her out in times of stress. Affiliative functions included offering help when needed, providing guidance and advice, helping the individual be sociable, and preventing isolation. By asking the participants to assign each descriptor to the relationship most likely to provide it, attachment functions were uniquely associated with romantic partners. However, affiliative functions were assigned to both romantic partners and friends. The idea that attachment relationships and the needs they address are unique to romantic relationships is supported in theory and by this empirical research. This study also provides the means to distinguishing needs and motivations for dating, whether they are more recreational or focused toward security and commitment.

Again, these studies provide some insight into the needs met from romantic relationships, especially the attachment related functions of romantic involvement. Future work needs to address the quality of relationships with parents for these young adults.

#### *Attachment Styles and Romantic Relationships*

Attachment styles, a separate though related concept to need for attachment, has been investigated as to how they may relate to possible motivations of romantic development. Hazan and Shaver's (1987) work used adult attachment styles to predict descriptions of an individual's most important love relationship. Results indicated adults with secure attachment styles endorsed friendly, happy, trusting relationships. Those reporting an avoidant style described fears of closeness and jealousy. Adults indicating anxious styles reported relationships including obsession, jealousy, emotional highs and lows, and desires for reciprocation and union. In this research, it is unclear whether motivations for romantic involvement are indicative of the results,

but it appears that research on attachment style has implications for study of motivations in romantic relationships.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) extended Bowlby's work on the internal models of self and others. These researchers proposed pairings of positive and negative perceptions of self and others in four styles: secure (positive self-positive other), preoccupied (negative self-positive other), dismissing (positive self-negative other), and fearful (negative self-negative other). With young adults as participants, results indicated that secure and preoccupied individuals reported significantly more romantic involvement than individuals identified as dismissing or fearful. Among other reported results, the secure group yielded uniquely high scores for intimacy in relationships, the dismissing group yielded uniquely low scores on emotional expressiveness, and the preoccupied group yielded high scores on self-disclosure, emotional expressiveness, reliance on others, and use of others as a secure base. Results of this study indicate linkages between individual differences in motivation for relationship and romantic involvement. Because secure and preoccupied individuals indicated greater romantic involvement, it is possible there are many pathways of influence on romantic relationship patterns.

Feeney and Noller (1990) explored dating behaviors and attitudes as they relate to adult attachment style. Utilizing men and women aged 17-58 and many measures addressing attachment style/history and attitudes on loving, they too found links between attachment styles and attitudes about relationships. Anxiously attached individuals indicated strong desires for commitment, preoccupation with partners, and high scores for dependency in their romantic relationships. On the other hand, avoidant individuals expressed mistrust and distance from others, avoidance for intimacy, and less emotional intensity in their relationships. This study

supports the idea that individual differences in attachment style influence the individuals' romantic involvement. Though using a sample of various ages, this research begins to tap into the processes involved in romantic development of young adults.

Pistole (1989) researched undergraduates' conflict style in relation to attachment theory. She proposed viewing conflict as a threat of separation. Asking undergraduates to recall their most important romantic relationship and describe conflict management techniques used, participants who indicated a secure attachment style used conflict strategies resulting in more mutual satisfaction (i.e., compromising, integrating). Young adults indicating an anxious attachment style were more likely to oblige the partner's wishes, sometimes at their own personal expense. Individuals with an avoidant style had difficulty focusing on partners' wishes but could use a compromising style better than the individuals with an anxious attachment style.

Ten years later, Pistole (1999) examined attachment styles of college students as they relate to commitment in romantic relationships. In this work, she found that individuals who identified themselves as having a secure or preoccupied attachment style were more likely to report stronger personal dedication to romantic relationships than individuals indicating a dismissing style. Although this was not the author's focus, this result appears to indicate that individuals with a secure or preoccupied style weigh greater importance for romantic relationships. In Pistole's work, motivations for relationships were not the focus of the research, but results suggest variations in the importance of the relationship related to attachment style.

#### *Parent Variables Related to Romantic Exploration*

More specific to the present study, some research has included current family relationships as they relate to romantic relationships. Although theory supports this idea, and the

research done in this area does too, more scholarly work is needed connecting parental support with romantic development.

Bradford and Lyddon (1993) examined the current parent-child relationships of young adults in exclusive romantic relationships for correlations with general psychological distress and relationship satisfaction. Using Armsden and Greenberg's Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachments (1987), the researchers found a significant relationship between relationships with parents and general psychological distress. However, the relationship with parents was not associated with relationship satisfaction. Important to note, their sample of young adults in exclusive romantic relationships does not seem to capture the full range of young adults' romantic exploration during this time period. Additional research addressing the processes of romantic involvement rather than the outcome of relationship satisfaction would add to understanding in this area.

Fullinwider-Bush and Jacobvitz (1993) researched the influence of closeness and autonomy in parent-child relationships on the exploration behaviors of young women. From the body of identity literature, this research focused on exploration across a variety of domains, including occupation, religion, dating, sexual expression, and friendship. Young women who reported parents encouraging autonomy while maintaining closeness also reported more exploration in friendships and dating relationships. Closeness and autonomy patterns more indicative of enmeshment in the parent-child relationship resulted in lower exploration, particularly with dating relationships. This study is particularly important to the present work, because it focuses on current parent-child relationships and young adults' behaviors in exploration as an outcome measure.

Continuing in importance to the present study, Butcher (1996) examined the influence of current supportive relationships with parents and romantic involvement among college students. In this study, romantic involvement was conceptualized as an indicator of exploration, but was measured by a single self-report of perceived level of involvement in romantic relationships as compared to peers. Romantic involvement and support from parents were predictive of intimacy development, but no link was found between parent support and romantic involvement. The researcher was uncertain whether this was a measurement issue or an accurate reflection of the relationship between the variables.

A year later, Butcher (1997) examined the influence of current supportive relationships with parents on involvement in romantic and sexual relationships among women college students. Through canonical analysis, she found a relationship between having positive and supportive relationships with parents and being less involved in romantic and sexual relationships. Women who reported little conflict with their parents were also more likely to report sexual involvement, comfort, and little anxiety with close relationships. However, young women reporting conflict with mother and an unimportant relationship with father were more likely to report increased anxiety, low motivation towards attachment in relationships, low importance and dissatisfaction with romantic involvement, and high sexual involvement and exploration. Although this study examined conflict and support in the current parent-child relationship, it shed more light on the behaviors of young women and possible needs met through romantic relationships. The researcher did not include young men in her sample.

Finally, Rader and Campbell (2001) examined the quality of family relationships for young women along with indicators of their romantic development. The primary focus on family relationships was that between the parents, but parent-child relationships were also

examined secondarily. Pertaining to the present study, the researchers found parent-child relationships to be a more important measure for indicators of romantic development than the relationship between the parents. When young women indicated support from their parents, especially their fathers, they were also more likely to indicate that an intimate relationship was important. In this case, romantic and sexual behaviors were not as important. On the other hand, young women reporting an unsupportive relationship with parents, especially their mothers, was related to greater romantic and sexual behaviors, measured by exploration and involvement. This study also did not include young men, but it indicates the importance for examining the quality of the parent-child relationship as it relates to the indicators of involvement and the perceived importance of romantic relationships.

Overall, this research including parent variables has come much closer to addressing how the parent-child relationship influences young adults' behaviors, motivation, and exploration in romantic development. However, the majority of these studies have utilized very select samples, such as young adult women or college students in exclusive romantic relationships. Use of these participants does not seem to reflect the range indicators for romantic development by young adults in this age period.

### *Summary*

The presented empirical literature indicates that attachment style is a common way for conceptualizing parental influence on young adults' social development, of interest to the current study—romantic development. More research is needed, which addresses parent variables as they relate to young adults' romantic development, specifically involvement and importance of attachment relationships. Additional research should also use a greater variety of participants in samples.

Viewing romantic development from attachment and social support perspectives seems to have theoretical support. In the empirical literature, attachment theory has been especially used in examining young adults' romantic relationships. More studies are needed which apply attachment and social support theory to romantic development. Furthermore, there is a need to focus the research on romantic development in two dimensions—an examination of involvement indicated by romantic behaviors and an analysis of the importance given to attachment relationships, indicated by motivation and exploration. Graber, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn (1999) reviewed literature on adolescents' and young adults' behaviors and beliefs about sexual and romantic relationships. Throughout their review of studies, they made a distinction between research addressing romantic relationship expectations and relationship behaviors.

Due to historical, economic, familial, and social forces, the behaviors and expectations for romantic relationships may shift (Graber et al., 1999). For example, most young adults report the attitude that sexual behavior is only for long-term, committed relationships (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1995). Yet, the rates of sexual intercourse prior to a committed relationship or marriage have risen in the past thirty years. As another example, infidelity is generally considered unacceptable among adolescents, yet they have admitted to it, ranging from 20% to 64% depending on how it is defined (Feldman & Araujo, 1996). These examples indicate that adolescents' attitudes or ideas may be separate from their actual activity in regard to romantic relationships. Therefore, these researchers suggest that future research needs to look at the attitude and behavior dimension of romantic activity separately. For the present study, indications of young adults' romantic involvement and perceived importance for attachment relationships need further clarification.

## Rationale

Romantic development is a broad concept, addressed through different perspectives in theory and research. Frequently receiving attention in the popular media, scholarly work on young adults' romantic development has greatly increased in the past twenty years. Many studies have examined sexual and romantic behaviors, such as frequencies of dating and sexual contact. However, there is a need for greater understanding regarding parental influences on romantic development, a task that is central to young adults' lives (Erikson, 1968). In defining the broad term romantic development, researchers have focused on different aspects, depending upon their perspective and focus for scholarly work. For example, Graber et al. (1999) reviewed literature on adolescents' and young adults' beliefs and behaviors regarding sexual and romantic relationships. They came to the conclusion that in researching romantic development, beliefs and attitudes may be separate from young adults' actual activity in regard to romantic relationships. Therefore, these researchers suggested that future research should look at the attitude and behavior dimensions of romantic development separately. Rader's (2001) research was consistent with this pattern of two dimensions in romantic development through the interpretation of two factors—Importance of Attachment Relationships and Romantic and Sexual Involvement.

For the present study, the concept of romantic development was thought of as including the two dimensions of romantic involvement and the perceived importance of attachment relationships (Rader, 2001). For example, one young adult may report greater sexual or dating involvement but not be thinking about having a long-term, committed intimate relationship at this time. On the other hand, another young adult may be wanting, thinking about, and exploring romantic relationships but not actively engaging in such behaviors at the time.



Because parents are thought to have a strong influence on their children, even as they become young adults, the supportive quality of the parent-child relationship may influence the dimensions of romantic development. Attachment and social support theory can be used to guide the questions asked and results expected in examining such an influence on romantic development.

Major contributors to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and social support theory (Weiss, 1974) provide a framework for understanding the parents' role as it relates to their young adult children forming romantic relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Bradford & Lyddon, 1993; Butcher, 1996; Butcher, 1997; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Attachment theory largely focuses on early parent-child relationships and attachment styles. This theory suggests that patterns of attachment are first established with primary caregivers (Bowlby, 1969). Later in life, the adolescent or young adult transfers the "attaching" behavior to a partner through romantic involvement (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, the parent-child bond serves as a basis in forming an "internal working model" that the young adult then applies to romantic relationships. This theory suggests that people have attachment needs and seek out someone who can fulfill those needs, whether that is a parent or romantic partner. Empirical research has supported such attachment functions associated with romantic partners (Furman & Wehner, 1997; Sheldon & West, 1987; West, 1994).

Other research has also examined parent-child relationships and romantic development, focusing on instances that might indicate when attachment needs are not met for the children, such as instances of divorce and conflict between the parents. Not all of this research has used attachment as a guiding theoretical framework, but the studies have explored similar qualitative aspects of the parent-child relationship. In such cases where adolescents or young adults report

insufficient support and attention from their parents, accelerated romantic behaviors have been reported (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Butcher, 1997; Devine, Long, & Forehand, 1993; Hetherington, 1972; Johnston & Thomas, 1996; Long, 1987; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Newcomer & Udry, 1987; Rader & Campbell, 2001).

Social support theory lends a present-oriented view of parents' roles in their adult children's lives. In addition, social support theory examines the functions served by, or various needs met through social relationships (Weiss, 1974). According to Weiss, an individual feels supported when attachment, social integration, opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, and obtaining guidance are met. As with attachment theory, there is a shift of importance in sources of support as children become adults, in which romantic relationships are emphasized more in adolescence and young adulthood (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Weiss, 1986). In an effort to form intimate relationships outside the family, the young adult is motivated to extend the social network to romantic partners as sources of support. However, parental support continues to be important to college students in the form of attachment, reassurance of worth, guidance, and reliable alliance (Campbell & Butcher, 1993; Flint, 1995). In examining the quality and function of support from parents, these attachment relationships provide young adults with a sense of security as they form romantic relationships.

Empirical research examining unsupportive relationships with parents appears to be more extensive than the research addressing positive, supportive relationships. Nevertheless, researchers who have examined qualitatively supportive parent-child relationships have found results in which young adults reported less involvement in romantic and sexual behaviors when they perceive support from their parents (Butcher, 1997; Rader & Campbell, 2001). Rader and Campbell found that young adults who indicated supportive relationships with their parents were

also more likely to indicate importance in having attachment relationships (Rader & Campbell, 2001). In general, there was a link between young women perceiving their mother and father as supportive and reporting fewer romantic and sexual behaviors while reporting greater motivation and exploration in romantic relationships. In Rader and Campbell's study, romantic involvement (measured by sexual and romantic behaviors) was interpreted as a separate dimension from the importance of attachment relationships (measured by motivation and exploration). These results suggest that parents who fulfill a supportive role for their adult children are meeting their needs, and the young adults do not feel as compelled to seek support elsewhere. These adult children may feel that intimate relationships are important, but in this case, they are in no hurry to be involved in relationship and sexual behaviors. Rather, having experienced a good relationship with their parents, they want to continue having satisfying relationships with others (Fullinwider-Bush & Jacobvitz, 1993) and maintain a strong social support network.

Attachment and social support theories help researchers understand how young adults' involvement and motivation for romantic relationships may be influenced by support between the parent and young adult child. These theories indicate that a supportive parent-child relationship provides protection for young adults, leading to less risky behaviors and relationship involvement. Such a relationship also encourages the young adult to form healthy, satisfying romantic relationships with others. On the other hand, an unsupportive parent-child relationship seems to propel young adults into more risky behaviors and can have detrimental effects on the importance of forming future romantic relationships. Although theorists purport the combined support from both parents is most important (Furman & Wehner, 1997; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Weiss, 1974), others suggest it may be important to examine mother-child and father-child relationships separately.

Because studies investigating parental support and romantic development have been done with only young women (Butcher, 1997; Rader, 2001), more information is needed about young men. Though some studies indicate gender is not a significant variable in researching parental support, many other studies indicate women are closer and more attached to their families than men, with their parents having greater influence on women (Kenny, 1987, 1990; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988; Troll & Bengston, 1979). Kenny and Donaldson (1991) reported that not only did women seek out their parents' support more frequently, but they also reported higher levels of social competence. Although not tested directly in prior studies, women perceiving greater parental support may place a greater importance of attachment relationships in their romantic development.

In this study, the supportive nature of the parent-child relationship was examined for how it relates to the importance of attachment relationships and romantic involvement. It was thought that differences would exist in measures of young adults' romantic development, based on their perceived level of support from parents. Although there is not much research including men regarding parental support and romantic development, it was believed that the influence of parental support would be different for males and females. Women who perceive greater parental support may place a greater importance on attachment relationships.

The following research questions were addressed. First, it was expected that differences would exist in measures of young adults' romantic development, based on their perceived level of support from parents. Support from parents would be positively related to exploration and motivation for romantic relationships. Support from parents would be negatively related to involvement in romantic and sexual behaviors.

Second, an interaction of parental support and gender was expected to influence the importance of romantic relationships, but not involvement in romantic relationships. Parental support was expected to be related to the importance of attachment relationships for young women but not men. Regarding romantic involvement, no interaction was expected. Parental support was expected to have an equivalent effect on romantic involvement for men and women.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants and Procedures

The present study utilized a sample of 157 undergraduate women aged 18 to 22 years old and 144 undergraduate men aged 18 to 22, with a mean age of 19.7 years ( $SD = 1.32$ ) at the University of North Texas who were currently enrolled in introductory level psychology courses. The age range was restricted due to the developmental nature of issues being addressed by the research questions. Furthermore, males and females were included, due to evidence that importance of supportive parent-child relationships (Kenny 1987; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991) and romantic development (McDonald & McKinney, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987) differ by gender for this age group. These students were recruited through the UNT psychology department subject pool and received extra credit for their participation in the study. All procedures were approved through the UNT Institutional Review Board.

Participants came from intact and separated families. Some research has indicated parental divorce can influence support in the parent-child relationship (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Hepworth, Ryder, & Dreyer, 1984). Other research has indicated that conflict is a more important predictor of romantic relationship patterns than divorce (Marsh & Campbell, 1990; Quinn & Campbell, 1995; Rader & Campbell, 2001). Therefore, utilizing young adults from different family backgrounds will preserve the variation of this variable.

Students were given questionnaire packets, along with consent forms, in group administrations. Participants were asked to provide demographic data and complete self-report measures regarding their interpersonal relationships (See Appendix A). All identifying material

was removed from the packets in order to ensure confidentiality. The packets included the measures described below, and completion of the packet took approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

## Instruments

### *Basic Demographics*

In order to establish a general description of the sample collected, a demographics questionnaire was included in the research packet. Information about age, ethnic/racial background, parents' marital status, and extent of contact with parents, and other background information were gathered.

### *Relationship Biography*

In addition to basic demographic questions, the subjects were asked to provide information about their past, current, and potentially future romantic relationships for additional descriptive purposes. Items were scored individually with response choices varying from two to five categories. Examples of such questions were taken from work by Hendrick and Hendrick (1991), and they address areas such as current romantic relationship status, number of romantic relationships, and length of romantic involvements. Tapping into their future outlook, participants were also asked whether they expect to marry and the age at which they might expect this to occur.

## Supportive Parent-Child Relationship Variables

*Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI)*. This 25-item self-report questionnaire was designed by Pierce, Sarason, and Sarason (1991) to assess the supportive nature and quality of close relationships. Butcher (1997) used this instrument to examine the nature of supportive relationships between parents and their young adult children. This inventory was included in this study to determine the importance of parent-child relationship variables with romantic

development. The instrument contains three scales (Support, Conflict, and Depth), which were derived from factor analysis of the items and reflect relationship-based aspects of social support. The 7 Support items tap into the extent to which a person perceives another as a source of assistance in various situations. The 12 Conflict items tap into how much the reported amount of conflict felt with another person impacts the supportive nature of the relationship. The 6 Depth items tap into the perceived importance of a relationship and impact it has on the person's life. All of the scale's items were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). Butcher's (1997) and Rader's (2001) research found a high internal consistency for the scales of this measure with Cronbach's alpha in the .80s to .90s. Similarly in the present study, the Cronbach's alphas ranged from .78 (Maternal Depth) to .92 (Paternal Support and Paternal Conflict) for the females surveyed and from .80 (Maternal Support) to .90 (Paternal Support) for the males surveyed.

Each of these subscales was used in Butcher's (1997) and Rader's (2001) work to assess relationships between participants and their parents, as they were utilized in the present study. The various dimensions of support tapped by this instrument should be helpful in determining the importance of relationships within the family and the young adult's romantic development.

#### Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance

*Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale (AAD)*. This instrument measured the extent to which individuals endorse affiliative and attachment related statements regarding their current goals for romantic involvement. Sheldon and West (1989) developed this scale from a representative list of attachment and affiliative functions served by adult social relationships. There are 17 Attachment descriptors (e.g., prevents loneliness, provides sense of security) and 26 Affiliative descriptors (e.g., shares common interests, comfortable). Participants in West's work



demonstrated that the attachment descriptors were endorsed more often in describing functions of a romantic relationship. The affiliative functions were ascribed to romantic relationships as well as other close relationships with people.

In the present study, participants were asked to consider their current reasons for dating and to rate the various relationship statements as to their importance in romantic relationships. It is believed that the level of endorsement reflects attachment and affiliation motivations for dating and romantic involvement. Participants endorsed each descriptor according to a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important to me at all in terms of a romantic relationship) to 5 (very important in terms of what I'm looking for in a romantic relationship). Thus, scores for Attachment Motivation could range from 17 to 85 and scores for Affiliation Motivation could range from 28 to 140. In Rader's research (2001), a composite score was obtained by combining the Attachment and Affiliation Motivations for an overall score indicating the participants' importance for an attachment relationship, ranging from 43 to 215.

For the current study, a combined score of the Attachment and Affiliation Motivation scores was also used to gain an overall score of the participants' perceived importance in having romantic relationships. Results should provide the extent of dating motivation through the importance of attachment and affiliation functions. Similar to Rader's (2001) prior research, combining the scores of Attachment and Affiliation yielded a very strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .91 and .94 for the females and males surveyed, respectively, in the present study.

*Life Choices Questionnaire (LCQ)* (© H. Grotevant, St. Paul, MN). Grotevant (1989) developed this instrument to assess the exploratory behavior of participants across 12 domains of identity development. The participants were asked to think about their recent exploratory

behavior across various domains by endorsing strategies that could be utilized in the exploratory process (e.g., searched for more information about the topic, gained first hand experience with the topic). Next, the participants rated whether they have used each strategy (within the past month) in conjunction with exploration in each domain on a scale from 1 (not used) to 5 (actively and seriously used). Scores were then summed to result in subscale scores for the Dating and Sexual Exploration domains and both subscales were summed together for a total exploration score. Scores for the two domains ranged from 20 to 100 with higher scores indicating greater frequency of exploratory behaviors. Originally, the scores could range from 22 to 110; however, in the present study, approximately one third of the participants did not answer the first column of questions tapping into whether they had “thought about the topic.” It is possible this occurred because a code was included in this column for later entering the data, and this may have confused participants. In order to avoid a potential confounding variable, this column was dropped from further data analysis.

Fullinwider-Bush and Jacobvitz (1993) utilized several subscales (Occupation, Friendship, and Dating) of the LCQ in a study with college women. They presented evidence for construct validity finding significant positive correlations between exploration on the LCQ and Berzonsky’s (1986) measure of exploration.

Exploration behaviors are an important part of romantic development. The LCQ provides a method for measuring such exploratory behaviors specific to dating and sexual involvement. In the current study, only the romantic development related subscales (Dating and Sexual Expression) were utilized and combined for a total score. Butcher (1997) used these subscales separately and found a strong internal consistency for the measures with Cronbach’s alpha for the Dating subscale at .90 and for the Sexual Expression subscale at .94. Rader (2001)

also found a strong internal consistency with .92 and .93 as the respective Cronbach's alphas. In the present study, the respective Cronbach's alphas were similar at .94 for females surveyed and .93 for males surveyed.

*Exploration and Commitment Scale (ECS).* George (1996) developed the Exploration and Commitment Scale to assess the degree of exploration and commitment reported by young adults in four ideological and four interpersonal domains of identity development, including a domain that addresses Dating Exploration. The participants were asked to place themselves on a continuum describing their degree of exploration in various areas. Possible responses for the Exploration Scale range from 1 ("I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now") to 5 ("I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of people or sources about it, and I believe I understand a variety of perspectives about it"). The possible responses for the Commitment Scale range from 1 ("I don't have any set ideas about it") to 5 ("I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future"). Using a female, college-aged sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .74 for the total exploration scale was obtained, indicating acceptable internal consistency for this research measure (George, 1996).

For the purpose of the present study, only the Dating Exploration score was proposed for use. In comparison to the other exploration measure, the Life Choices Questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha was relatively lower with .73 for females surveyed and .77 for males surveyed. In looking closer at the items and how they correlated with items from the Life Choices Questionnaire (LCQ), it appears these two measures, originally thought to be similar, were not tapping into a comparable exploration construct. If they were measuring a similar concept, it would be expected they correlate highly and significantly with each other. However, that was not necessarily the case (see Table 5). In looking at results from the total sample, their

relationship was minimal. A closer examination of the correlation matrices for each gender (Tables 6 and 7) provides a different picture with no significant relationship for women, but a positive and significant relationship for men ( $r = .29$ ). These discrepant results do indicate that the ECS measure of Exploration did not perform as originally expected, in accordance with the LCQ measure. By looking at the questionnaire items closer, it appears the LCQ examines what exploratory activities participants are doing, but the Exploration and Commitment Scale (ECS) targets whether ideas and views have been established or not, having explored. In other words, the LCQ taps into the exploration process, whereas the ECS taps into the end results from exploring. Because the ECS appears to be a different concept that does not directly tap into the exploration construct of interest in the present study, it was not included in further analyses.

*Motivation for a Future Committed Relationship.* Two questions were included to identify how motivated young adults were in their romantic development. These questions tapped into the importance of romantic relationships for young adults. Participants were asked whether they expect to ever form a committed, long-term relationship or marry, by answering “yes” or “no.” Prior research has indicated that 76% of males and 82% of females responded “yes” (Johnston, Bachman, & O’Malley, 1995). In the present study, a large proportion (92.7%) among male and female participants responded “yes.”

Also, participants were asked the age they expect to form this committed, long-term relationship or marriage, if applicable. In asking traditional-aged college students’ this question, Willetts-Bloom and Nock (1992) found the majority of participants indicated their late twenties ( $M = 26.013, SD = 2.531$ ). Similar results were found in the present study, with a mean age of 23.86 ( $SD = 5.44$ ).

## Indicators of Romantic Involvement

*Romantic Involvement Behaviors Scale.* Butcher (1997) used three questions to assess the level of romantic involvement among young women. Used in this study, these questions were presented in a Likert scale format, addressing the age at which the participant first fell in love, the number of romantic relationships involved in, and the number of relationships in which he or she felt “in love” with a romantic partner. The response choices for these questions ranged from 6 to 7 categories with a total score ranging from 3 to 20 to indicate overall romantic involvement reported by the participant. Butcher reported a moderate internal consistency for this scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .56. The internal consistency for Rader (2001) was similar with a Cronbach’s alpha of .58. In the present study, the internal consistency was slightly lower, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .45 for females surveyed and .53 for males surveyed. Though these alphas are low, it might be expected with a scale comprised of only three questions.

*Sexual Involvement Scale.* Butcher (1997) and Rader (2001) used three questions to evaluate the overall level of sexual involvement of the participants. Used again in this study, questions were presented in a Likert format, addressing the current status of sexual relationship, number of past sexual relationships, and age of first sexual experience. Response choices ranged from 3 to 7 categories with a total score ranging from 3 to 16, indicating degree of overall sexual involvement. Butcher (1997) reported a moderately strong internal consistency for this scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of .74. The internal consistency for Rader’s research (2001) was slightly lower with a Cronbach’s alpha of .62. In the present study, it was slightly higher with a Cronbach’s alpha of .65 for females surveyed and .66 for males surveyed. Overall, these alphas do appear low, but again, it is to be expected with only three questions for the scale.

## Research Question and Hypotheses

The question that was addressed in this study concerned whether the supportive quality of the parent-child relationship predicted indicators of young adults' romantic development. From theoretical and empirical research, it could be expected that the supportive quality of the parent-child relationship would influence involvement and the perceived importance of attachment relationships. Furthermore, it was expected that the interaction of support and gender would affect romantic development. Thus, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Support in the parent-child relationship would predict the set of variables measuring attachment relationship importance (motivation and dating & sexual exploration).
  - a. The influence of support would be moderated by gender on this set of variables measuring attachment relationship importance.
2. Support in the parent-child relationship would predict the set of variables measuring romantic involvement (romantic and sexual involvement).
  - a. The influence of support would not be moderated by gender on this set of variables measuring romantic involvement.

## Design

The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression analysis to examine the extent to which the three blocks of independent variables (gender; parent-child relationship; interaction variables) predicted the sets of dependent variables (indicators of attachment relationship importance and romantic involvement). Gender was entered as the first block; followed by the block of parent-child relationship variables; and the block of interaction variables was entered last. The parent-child relationship variables were entered in the second

block to evaluate their addition to prediction over and above gender. Regression analyses were performed for each of the dependent variables.

### Analyses

Preliminary analyses included correlations to examine the variables measuring the parent-child relationship, indicators of attachment relationship importance, and indicators of romantic involvement. Results were used to look for multicollinearity, normality, redundancy in the measures, and to evaluate the number of dimensions measured by each set of variables. This information was used to reduce the number of variables, and to determine what variables should be included in the blocks for the multiple regression.

A multiple regression format was used to determine the influences on the indicators of young adults' romantic development. The first set of dependent variables was the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance were measured by: Dating and Sexual Exploration [LCQ], and Attachment/Affiliation Motivation [AAD]. The second set of dependent variables was the Indicators of Romantic Involvement were measured by: Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement [RIBS] and Sexual Involvement [SIS].

Among the independent variables, the first block measured the young adults' reported gender (male or female). The second block of variables addressed the relationship between the young adults and their parents. These included Maternal Support, Maternal Conflict, Maternal Depth, Paternal Support, Paternal Conflict, and Paternal Depth [QRI]. The third block included interaction variables that were the product of gender (male/female) and the support variables measuring the quality of the parents-young adult relationship.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Description of the Sample

The present study utilized a sample of 157 female and 144 male undergraduate students with a mean age of 19.7 ( $SD = 1.32$ ) years. To evaluate whether the sample was typical, demographic characteristics (see Table 1, Appendix C) were considered relative to other studies using similar samples (Butcher, 1997; Rader, 2001). No large differences were noted. Additionally, results from the demographic data in the present study indicated the participants had some degree of interest and involvement in relationships, an important premise to this research. A majority of the participants indicated they were Caucasian with their parents married and living together. Many reported a close relationship with their mothers and fathers, indicating it as much closer now in comparison to childhood. Approximately half of the participants reported currently being in a romantic relationship, and a majority of them indicated the length of the relationship was longer than six months. Almost everyone surveyed reported thinking about someday having a long-term relationship with ages in the mid-twenties most frequently identified as when it would be initiated.

To determine whether there was a statistical relationship between gender and the other demographic variables, chi-square tests of independence were conducted. Overall, males and females appeared to be responding similarly. The few differences that did emerge were largely related to romantic relationships and indicated greater involvement among females. A significantly greater proportion of women reported being in a romantic relationship currently than men, and more women indicated their relationship length as more than two years. On the other hand, more men reported being single and not actively dating than women. While both



men and women endorsed a heterosexual orientation most frequently, more men than women reported a homosexual orientation. These demographic results largely fell within expected ranges, based on prior research using the same instruments (Butcher, 1997; Rader, 2001).

#### Description of the Set of Parent-Child Relationship Variables

Data from the parent-child relationship variables were examined to determine whether participants were overall indicating good relationships, similar to prior research samples, and if the distributions of responses were normal or skewed. Three mother-child relationship variables and three corresponding father-child relationship variables from the Quality of Relationships Inventory (Pierce et al., 1991) were originally proposed for use in the present study. Means, standard deviations, and score ranges for these measures of parent-child relationships are presented in Table 2 of Appendix C. Comparative data using previously reported findings is in the Methods section of this paper.

Overall, participants indicated good, supportive relationships with their parents. Regarding their relationships with their mothers, present study participants reported high levels of Support and Depth and moderately low levels of Conflict. Similar in their relationships with their fathers, present study participants reported high levels of Support and Depth and moderately low levels of Conflict. The range of responses endorsing Support was negatively skewed, indicating that many participants did perceive a lot of support in these relationships. Nevertheless, scores appear to fall within an anticipated range when comparing responses to those of previous study participants (Butcher, 1997; Pierce et al., 1991), though they do appear to indicate less Support and Depth along with greater Conflict in comparison to Rader's recent research (2001).

Only one significant difference was found related to gender. Women reported a higher level of Depth with their mothers than the men. Although this is a statistical difference, both men and women still indicated a high level of Depth in this relationship.

Finally, correlations among the parent-child relationship variables were examined to verify Support and Depth were positively related to each other and negatively related to Conflict, in comprising the Parent-Child Relationship Variables (Table 5 of Appendix C). The parent-child relationship variables were most highly related to each other, in comparison to the other variables used in this study. As expected, the two positive attributes of the parent-child relationship, Support and Depth, were highly and significantly related to each other regarding mother ( $r = .67$ ) and father ( $r = .83$ ),  $p < .01$ . Also expected, Conflict was negatively related to Support and Depth with mothers as well as Support and Depth with fathers. All of these relationships were highly significant,  $p < .01$ . When examining the correlation matrices for female and male participants separately (Tables 6 and 7), the same patterns emerged. The relationships in the present study between Support, Depth, and Conflict have been found in prior research, using the same measure (Butcher, 1997; Rader, 2001).

#### Description of the Set of Romantic Development Variables

Data from the romantic development variables were examined to determine the degree of exploration, motivation, and involvement reported by the participants. Five measures of romantic development were originally proposed for use in the present study. Table 3 (Appendix C) presents means, standard deviations, and score ranges for these measures. Comparative data using previously reported findings may be found in the Methods section of this paper.

Overall, participants reported moderate levels of exploration, motivation, and involvement, as measured by the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance and

Indicators of Romantic Involvement. The Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance were tapped into by two measures of romantic exploration and one measure of motivation: the combined Dating Exploration and Sexual Exploration subscales from the Life Choices Questionnaire (© H. Grotevant, 1989, St. Paul, MN), the Dating Exploration subscale of the Exploration and Commitment Scale (George, 1996), and the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale (Sheldon & West, 1987). Moderate levels of exploration were reported on the combined Dating and Sexual Exploration scale (LCQ). While responses to the Dating Exploration subscale of the Exploration and Commitment Scale indicated a moderately high level of exploration, this scale was not retained for additional analyses due to its psychometric characteristics, discussed further in the Methods section of this paper. Participants also indicated a moderately high level of emotional neediness for romantic relationships, assessed by participants' motivation for dating and romantic development with the combined ratings of the Attachment Motivation and Affiliation Motivation scales in the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale. In comparison to Butcher's (1997) prior research, these scores are comparable for dating and sexual exploration as well as romantic motivation. However, results from female participants indicate less Dating and Sexual Exploration and less motivation for attachment and affiliation in comparison to the young women in Rader's recent research (2001).

The Indicators of Romantic Involvement were assessed using three questions that comprised the Romantic Involvement Behaviors Scale and an additional three questions that comprised the Sexual Involvement Scale. From both scales, participants indicated a moderate level of involvement. These scores should be cautiously compared to previous research, because the questions were slightly altered for the present study by giving participants a wider range of choices, including "not romantically involved" or "not sexually involved," as appropriate for the

question. This was done in efforts to avoid unanswered questions, in cases when participants were indicating no involvement. However, taking that into consideration, these scores do seem comparable to prior research (Butcher, 1997), although they are indicating more romantic and sexual behaviors than the results of Rader's recent research (2001). Again, making such a comparison should be considered with caution since both Butcher (1997) and Rader (2001) included only female participants, unlike the present study.

An examination of gender differences showed that women endorsed more Dating and Sexual Exploration, measured by the combined subscales of the Life Choices Questionnaire as compared to males. Both indicated a moderate level of exploration, although women indicated a somewhat higher level of exploratory behaviors, such as talking to others, searching for more information, and gaining first hand experience with dating.

Next, all of the correlations were examined to evaluate decisions made about how to organize the romantic development variables (Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance and Indicators of Romantic Involvement); see Table 5, Appendix C. The observation that intercorrelations were highest within each set of variables provides some support for the two clusters, although it should be noted that the correlations between the different sets of variables were also moderately high. This pattern of findings was similar when examining the correlation matrices for women and men separately, though it did appear slightly stronger for women.

#### Preliminary Analyses

Given the large number of variables in the present study, preliminary analyses were conducted to evaluate redundancy and normality among the data and its measures. Variables were first examined for multicollinearity. Multicollinearity can create a problem for interpreting results, because statistical techniques are unable to separate out the independent contributions of

each independent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The two variables contain redundant information and are therefore not needed in the same analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest any bivariate correlation that reaches or exceeds .70 is most likely affecting the data set, and variables with such a high correlation should be considered to measure the same construct.

Preliminary correlations were conducted on the variables for the total sample (Table 5). The set of Parent-Child Relationship variables, taken from the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI) were examined first. Among the participants, a high correlation was evident between Maternal Support and Maternal Depth ( $r = .67$ ). Additionally, Paternal Support and Paternal Depth ( $r = .83$ ) were highly correlated. The variables of Support and Depth appear to contain redundant information, reaching and exceeding the criteria for multicollinearity. Because the Support variable better taps into the concept pertinent to the current research, the Maternal and Paternal Depth variables were dropped from further analyses. This same pattern of multicollinearity was found in prior research, with the same approach to avoiding redundancy (Rader, 2001).

Next, the two clusters of romantic development variables were examined, the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance and the Indicators of Romantic Involvement. None of the correlations approached the .70 criteria for multicollinearity. Therefore, all four variables were retained for further analyses.

Next, the appropriateness of transformation to skewed variables was examined, specifically for Maternal Support and Paternal Support. Both variables were positively skewed without transformation and negatively skewed with it, trying logarithmic and square root methods. Therefore, the two support variables were not transformed.

## Principal Analyses

### Hierarchical Multiple Regression

The hypotheses of this study were tested using hierarchical multiple regression analyses to identify which independent variables (gender, parent-child relationship variables, and interaction terms) would predict the four dependent variables. They included Dating and Sexual Exploration, Attachment/Affiliation Motivation (comprising the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance), Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement, and Sexual Involvement (comprising the Indicators of Romantic Involvement); see Figure 1, Appendix C. Separate regressions were conducted to examine each of the dependent variables. For all of the regressions, the independent variables were entered in three blocks, with the first including gender, the second including the parent-child relationship variables, and the third including the interaction between the participants' gender and the support in the parent-child relationship. This third block was to include two interaction terms, gender with paternal support and gender with maternal support. However, these two interaction terms were highly correlated, ( $r = .756$ ),  $p < .001$ . This strong relationship exceeds the .70 criteria for multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001); therefore, separate regressions were conducted with each interaction term for each dependent variable. The four regressions, one for each of the four dependent variables, were repeated with different interaction terms. This resulted in a total of eight regression analyses. The blocks of independent variables were entered in hierarchical order based on the hypotheses to determine the unique predictive power of each block of variables.

## Results of Hierarchical Regression Models for the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance

### *Models for Dating and Sexual Exploration*

A summary of the hierarchical regression models for the dependent variable Dating and Sexual Exploration is presented in Tables 8 and 9 (Appendix C). In both models, the first block, addressing the young adults' gender, was a significant predictor for Dating and Sexual Exploration, accounting for 2.8% of the variance in the model. Whether the participant was a male or female appeared to make a difference in predicting this variable. Because gender was coded as a dummy variable for analysis, the beta weights were not interpretable. However, an examination of the means in Table 3 showed that females reported significantly greater Dating and Sexual Exploration than males. The second block of the model was not significant. However, the variable measuring paternal conflict was significant in predicting Dating and Sexual Exploration ( $R^2 = .051$  and change in  $R^2 = .024$ ). This finding must be interpreted tentatively, because the block was not significant. Nevertheless, beta weights indicated that perceived conflict in the relationship with father was related to exploration. In looking closer at the zero order correlations between paternal conflict and the Dating and Sexual Exploration measure, the relationship was not significant for the total sample or just the male participants, though it was significant for women ( $r = .19$ ). The third block, introducing the interaction term gender and maternal support in the first model and gender and paternal support in the second model, did not add significantly to the prediction of this variable. Therefore, it appears that knowing gender and paternal conflict is important to predicting Dating and Sexual Exploration.

### *Models for Attachment/Affiliation Motivation*

A summary of the hierarchical regression models for the dependent variable Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is presented in Tables 10 and 11 (Appendix C). In both models, the first block addressing the young adults' gender, was not a significant predictor. However, the second block, measuring support and conflict in the parent-child relationship, was a significant predictor in both models. This block accounted for 4.0% of the variance in the models. In looking at the beta weights, a supportive relationship with father appears related to Attachment/Affiliation Motivation. A closer examination of the zero order correlations indicates that paternal support and Attachment/Affiliation Motivation are positively related for women and men, though not meeting statistical significance. The interaction terms of parental support and gender were not significant predictors.

### Results of Hierarchical Regression Models for the Indicators of Romantic Involvement

#### *Models for Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement*

A summary of the hierarchical regression models for the dependent variable Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement is presented in Tables 12 and 13 (Appendix C). In both models, none of the blocks were significant predictors of the young adults' Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement.

#### *Models for Sexual Involvement*

A summary of the hierarchical regression models for the dependent variable Sexual Involvement is presented in Tables 14 and 15 (Appendix C). In both models, the first block that addressed gender was a significant predictor for Sexual Involvement, accounting for 1.5% of the variance in the model. This indicated that whether the participant is a male or female made a difference in predicting this variable. An examination of the means in Table 3 showed that



females reported more Sexual Involvement than males, though this difference was not significant. The second block, which addressed the parent-child relationship, was not significant, and the third block, which included the interaction terms of parental support and gender were also not significant in both models.

### Follow-up Analyses

The present research was a partial replication of Rader's prior research (2001), which also addressed the influence of parent-child relationships on young adults' romantic development, but considered these influences for both women and men. However, the results in the present study were inconsistent with those of Rader's earlier study. Therefore, additional analyses were conducted to explore potential factors contributing to the different results. Factors explored included whether the participants sampled were significantly different from each other regarding the reported quality of the parent-child relationship and the exploration, motivation, and involvement in romantic relationships. Additionally, the data were reanalyzed using a slightly different design as done in prior research (Rader & Campbell, 2001) in efforts to account for more variance.

First, potential differences in demographic characteristics, the parent-child relationship, and romantic development were considered by comparing mean differences between data in the present study with prior research (Rader, 2001). Because the present study included both male and female participants, whereas Rader's (2001) research included only females, only data from female participants was compared to data from the prior study. To test for significant differences, t-tests were conducted (Table 4, Appendix C). Overall, many differences emerged that were small, but significant. In comparison to Rader's (2001) sample, female participants in the present research were older, reported less supportive relationships with parents, less romantic

exploration, but more reported behaviors in romantic relationships. Rader's research also focused on the relationship between parents, and while that was not addressed in the analyses in the present study, in both samples a comparable 60% of the participants indicated their parents' marriage was intact. Therefore, this is not likely a contributing factor to the differences between samples. On the other hand, the length of participants' romantic relationships may be important to consider. A larger proportion of the women involved in such relationships in Rader's research (28%) indicated their relationship length as less than three months, in comparison to the women in the present study (13%).

Second, there were differences in the design in the present study and that used by Rader and Campbell (2001), and it seemed possible these were accounting for the different results. Rader and Campbell's design was different in that age was entered first as a control, factor scores were used that may have refined the parent-child relationship and romantic development variables, and the parent's relationship with each other was included as a predictor. Nevertheless, their measures of the relationship between the parent and young adult as well as the young adults' romantic development were the same as those utilized in this study. The regression models in the present study, which at most accounted for 6% of the variance, did not account for as much variability as expected. Prior research, however, using the same instruments and similar pools of participants accounted for more variance (Rader, 2001; Rader & Campbell, 2001). For instance, the regression models in Rader and Campbell's poster presentation accounted for the most variance, as much as 23%. Additionally, age was examined as an independent variable in Rader and Campbell's study, so this was an opportunity to explore how it may contribute to predicting young adults' romantic development with data from the present study.

In efforts to replicate Rader and Campbell's study as much as possible, the data from male and female participants in the present study were separated for analysis, because only female participants were included in the prior research. This allowed for a better comparison between analyses of data from only female participants, in efforts to avoid the confounding effects of comparing results from different genders. The methodology was followed in first refining the multiple measures with principle components factor analysis. Then the factor scores were used in regression analyses.

Factor analyses were performed to determine whether the variables were performing in a similar manner in both studies, indicating a supportive relationship with each parent. Rader and Campbell conducted a factor analysis on "Family Relationship Variables," which included the parent-child relationship but also the parents' relationship with each other. After examining the factor loadings, Rader and Campbell labeled two factors Supportive Relationship with Mother and Supportive Relationship with Father. Data were only gathered for the parent-child relationship in the present study, but similar to the prior research, two factors emerged regarding this relationship (see Table 16). In looking at the data from the female participants, they represented a Supportive Relationship with Mother and a Supportive Relationship with Father in examining the factors. The loadings for Supportive Relationship with Mother indicated a supportive relationship with mother, lacking conflict. In the factor Supportive Relationship with Father, the loadings indicated strong paternal support with little conflict. For male participants, there were the same two factors, only derived in reverse order: Supportive Relationship with Father and Supportive Relationship with Mother. These two factors, both indicating a supportive relationship with each parent, were consistent for both Rader and Campbell's study (2001) and the present study.

Next, the Romantic Development variables were examined with factor analysis (see Table 16). In following Rader and Campbell's study, an additional variable of Marital Exploration, a subscale from the Life Choices Questionnaire (Grotevant, 1989), was included. Data for this subscale were gathered in the present study but not initially proposed as part of the analysis. Rader and Campbell labeled the two factors in their study Importance of Attachment Relationships and Romantic and Sexual Involvement. Again, a similar pattern of factor loadings was found from data in the present study. In looking at factors from the data of female participants (but also coincidentally data from the male participants, too), the first factor represented exploration and was labeled Attachment Relationship Importance. The second factor represented behaviors and therefore was labeled Romantic Involvement. The names of these factors are very similar in both studies. However, in the present study, since they corresponded with the originally proposed Indicators of Romantic Development, they were named accordingly. Overall, this meant that the variables in the present study were performing similarly to those measured in Rader and Campbell's research.

Next, the factors representing supportive parent-child relationships were examined for their ability to significant predict the factors representing romantic development and account for more variance in the regression models. While the factor analyses for both studies derived similar results, the hierarchical multiple regression analyses appeared very different. In Rader and Campbell's study, they examined different independent variables as predictors in two hierarchical regressions: age as the first block, factor scores for parental relationships with each other in the second block, factor scores for young adults' relationships with their parents in the third block, and interaction terms of the parent's relationship with each other and their marital status as the fourth block. Briefly, they found that age, the extent that the parents' relationship

was perceived as unsupportive and destructive, the quality of the relationship between the young women and their fathers, and the interaction of constructive parental relationships and family structure were significant predictors for the Importance of Attachment Relationships. The entire model accounted for 23% of the variance. Additionally, they found that the quality of the relationship with mother (negative loading) and the interaction term of constructive parental relationships by family structure were significant predictors for Romantic and Sexual Involvement. This model accounted for 17.5% of the variance.

The regressions could not be exactly replicated from Rader and Campbell's study, because in the present study, the parents' relationship with each other and their marital status were not data gathered for analysis. Nevertheless, a follow-up analysis with data from the present study was performed with Age in the first block and then the Parent-Child relationship variables following in the next block. This is similar to how the blocks were entered in Rader and Campbell's study.

As done with the factor analyses, separate regressions were performed for data from female and male participants. In the first regressions, the dependent variable was the factor Attachment Relationship Importance (see Table 17). Unlike the independent variables in Rader and Campbell's study, none in the present study were significant predictors when examining data for the female or male participants. In the second regression, the dependent variable was the factor Romantic Involvement (see Table 18). For females, age was a significant predictor. In the model with data from the male participants, there were no significant predictors. Based upon these follow-up analyses, the differences in results from the present study and Rader and Campbell's study appear even more pronounced. It was expected that using a similar model would account for more variance, but it did not.

In sum, these additional analyses indicated that the measurements are assessing the parent-child relationship and romantic development constructs in a predictable way consistent with Rader and Campbell's study, as evidenced by the factor analyses. However, the manner in which age and the quality of the parent-child relationship were able to predict aspects of romantic development was not consistent. This may reflect a difference in the participants themselves, though the differences between the samples were not necessarily substantial. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that regression results are not necessarily stable as they may capitalize on chance relationships in a particular sample, especially when the variables utilized are highly correlated with each other (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). This may account for some of the differences, too.

Regardless, these follow-up analyses, along with the prior study by Rader and Campbell, indicate that young adults' age may be an important variable to consider in romantic development. It was a significant predictor in both studies, though for different aspects of romantic development.

#### Summary of Findings

The present study utilized a sample of 157 female and 144 male participants, aged 18 to 22. The participants largely reported close relationships with their mother and father, though to a lesser extent than prior research (Rader, 2001). Furthermore, slightly over half of the young adults indicated currently being in a romantic relationship, although a significantly greater proportion of these reports were from women. Among all the participants, a very high percentage reported they think about someday having a long-term committed relationship or marriage.

Multiple hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine how three blocks of independent variables (gender entered first, support and conflict in the parent-child relationship entered second, and then interaction terms of gender and support in the parent-child relationship entered last) predicted the dependent variables within the two clusters measuring romantic development. In the models examining the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance, there were significant independent variables that predicted Dating and Sexual Exploration and Attachment/Affiliation Motivation. Dating and Sexual Exploration was predicted by the participants' gender and the parent-child relationship. Young women endorsed more of this exploration. Furthermore, paternal conflict was positively related to this variable. The variable Attachment/Affiliation Motivation was predicted by the parent-child relationship. A supportive relationship with father was related to this motivation. In the models examining the Indicators of Romantic Involvement, none of the variables significantly predicted Romantic Involvement. However, the variable Sexual Involvement was predicted by the participants' gender. Women endorsed more of this involvement. None of the interaction terms in the models proved significant.

Factor analyses and regressions using the factor scores were also conducted as follow-up analyses for comparison to Rader and Campbell's study (2001). The derived factors in both studies were very similar, indicating a consistency in the constructs measured. However, the hierarchical regressions from both studies had very different results.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how supportive aspects of the current parent-child relationship influence young adults' romantic development, specifically the two dimensions that tap into motivation for such relationships and specific behaviors with romantic partners. These two dimensions, identified by prior research (Graber, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Rader, 2001), were labeled the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance and the Indicators of Romantic Involvement for the present study. Additionally, interaction terms of parental support and participants' gender were examined in relation to the dimensions of romantic development.

The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. The first hypothesis stated the support in the parent-child relationship would predict the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance. This hypothesis was partially supported in that a supportive relationship with father predicted Attachment/Affiliation Motivation, a measure contributing to the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance. On the other hand, contrary results to this prediction were found with Dating and Sexual Exploration, the other measure included in this cluster. A relationship with father perceived as conflictual predicted this type of exploration; however, this must be interpreted more tentatively as the block of parent-child relationship variables was not a significant predictor in the regression model.

Additionally, it was expected the influence of support would be moderated by gender on this set of measures addressing attachment relationship importance. This hypothesis was not supported. Gender did predict the Dating and Sexual Exploration measure, but not in



conjunction with the supportive quality of the parent-child relationships. Women reported more Dating and Sexual Exploration.

The second hypothesis stated the support in the parent-child relationship would predict fewer romantic behaviors, as addressed by the Indicators of Romantic Involvement. This hypothesis was not supported. Gender predicted higher measures on the Sexual Involvement Scale, but not in conjunction with the supportive quality of the parent-child relationship. Women reported more sexual involvement.

Finally, it was expected the influence of support would not be moderated by gender on this set of variables measuring romantic involvement. This hypothesis was supported in that none of the interaction terms proved significant in predicting the Indicators of Romantic Involvement.

Overall, the results had some consistency with the body of literature that examines and supports parent-child relationships playing an important role in young adults' romantic development. However, there were also many unexpected results in the present study, demonstrating an inconsistency with prior research. First, the parents' role for young adults will be discussed, and second, what is understood about the indicators of romantic development will be addressed. Third, the construct of romantic development will be discussed in further detail, as it appears difficult to measure. Fourth, gender differences will be addressed, as some were and were not found in reference to the parent-child relationship and the romantic development variables. Fifth, a developmental perspective will be discussed as a way to conceptualize the influence of the parent-child relationship on young adults' romantic development. Finally, measurement issues and limitations for the present study, along with considerations for future research that have not been addressed will be discussed.

## The Parents' Role for Young Adults

The questions proposed in this study concerned how support in the parent-child relationship would predict aspects of young adults' romantic development, specifically indicators of attachment relationship importance and romantic involvement. Based on past research, it was predicted that support perceived from parents would be positively related to young adults' expressing attachment relationship importance, as evidenced by motivation for attachment relationships and engaging in exploration about romantic relationship topics. Furthermore, support from parents was expected to be negatively related to romantic and sexual involvement. Additionally, it was expected that the effect of parental support would vary with participants' gender for indicators of attachment relationship importance but not romantic involvement. While the hypotheses that support would play a key role were partly supported, the relationships found in the present study were weaker than those found in past research, and in one case in the opposite direction expected. It is possible that some of the variables included in prior studies but not in the present research, such as age, aspects of the parents' relationship with each other, and other peer relationships, may be important to obtain a clearer picture on how the parent-child relationship is influential.

The results from Butcher's (1997) and Rader's (2001) research contributed greatly to the expectations for the present study. Based upon this prior research, it seems that support in the parent-child relationship plays a role for young adults to consider romantic relationships, in terms of their motivations for finding a partner and learning more about such relationships through exploration. Furthermore, support with parents may play an additional role in that when it is present, young adults are less likely to engage in romantic and sexual behaviors. In the current study, these ideas on how parent-child relationships and young adults' romantic

development were linked were not supported conclusively. First, support in the parent-child relationship, specifically with father, did significantly predict a motivation in forming attachment and affiliative relationships with a romantic partner, but this significant block of variables accounted for minimal variance in the regression model. Second, conflict in the parent-child relationship, again specifically the father, significantly predicted exploration in dating and sexual activity. This finding must be interpreted tentatively. The father conflict variable was significant, but the block of parent-child relationship variables as a whole was not. In thinking about this result cautiously and looking at the zero order correlations, paternal conflict was positively and significantly related to this exploration for women, but for men, the relationship was negative, though minimal and not significant. Nevertheless, this finding is contrary to what was expected, because only a supportive quality to the parent-child relationship was believed to foster this kind of romantic development, based upon prior research as well as attachment theory. Exploration is fostered by support, not conflict, in the parent-child relationship according to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Third, support in the parent-child relationship did not appear to have a significant influence on young adults' sexual and romantic behaviors. This was surprising because previous research indicated a stronger link between the quality of the parent-child relationship and young adults' romantic involvement.

Results from the present study indicate that a supportive parental relationship encourages attachment motivation but a conflictual parental relationship may actually propel young adults, in this case it appears to be women, to learn about seeking support from others outside the family by engaging in more dating and sexual exploration. In one regard, motivation may be nurtured by support in the parent-child relationship, yet on the other hand, exploration may result from conflict in the parent-child relationship. This results in a mixed presentation, but it needs to be

interpreted with caution as these regression models accounted for a small portion of variance. Furthermore, there may be other variables important to consider that were included in the present study.

Butcher (1997) and Rader (2001), while examining the parent-child relationship and young adults' romantic development, considered additional variables. Butcher took into account participants' age in her analyses. Conducted as additional exploratory analyses in the present study, age was entered as the first block of variables, and parental support was entered in the second block in regression models for female and male participants, separately. Surprisingly, age was not a significant predictor for either gender regarding the variables of attachment relationship importance, in contrast to the results of Rader and Campbell (2001). In predicting romantic involvement, age was negatively related to involvement for females but not a significant predictor for males. It seems that in general, young women were reporting more sexual activity in the present study than in prior research (Butcher, 1997; Rader, 2001).

Besides age, another variable that seems important to consider in research about parent-child relationships and young adults' romantic development is the parents' relationship within the family. The quality of the parents' relationship to each other (Rader, 2001; Rader & Campbell, 2001) has been identified as an important variable to consider. For instance, a good portion of the literature on the impact of conflict and divorce between parents indicates that sexual behavior is prominent for such young adult children. Among such findings, these adults are initiating sexual intercourse at a younger age, having a greater amount of sex, engaging in premarital sex more often, having more sexual partners, and experiencing pregnancy at greater rates (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Devine, Long, & Forehand, 1993; Hetherington, 1999; Newcomer & Udry, 1987). Rader and Campbell (2001) examined the family status,

regarding whether the parents were married or divorced, and also took into account the perceived parental support and cooperation in the parents' relationship. Results suggested that the parents' relationship was important to young adults, as it did play a part in predicting young adults' romantic development. For instance, when the parents' relationship was perceived as unsupportive and destructive, and the quality of the father-daughter relationship was good, the young woman reported that an intimate relationship was more important. Regression models in Rader and Campbell's study, which included the parents' relationship with each other, accounted for much more variance in romantic development than those in the present study, as much as 23%. In the present study, blocks of variables did not account for more than 10% of the variance in the indicators of romantic development. Unfortunately, information was not gathered on the quality of the parents' relationship to each other for the present study, but it seems an important variable to consider in future research, as it may account for more variance. The perceived quality of the parents' relationship to each other is likely to have an affect on how the adult child relates to parents. For instance, a young adult's relationship with a parent who is happily married to the other parent may be perceived much differently than a relationship with a parent who experiences conflict or divorce with the other parent.

Additional studies from the body of literature examining parental support were examined for other variables that may have been overlooked in the present study. For instance, Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) identified the parent-child relationship as having an influence on involvement in friendships, or peer relationships, and they proposed this might then have an influence on the development of romantic relationships. Prior studies have demonstrated a link between a close parent-child relationship and the broader concepts of social interest and competence with a wide variety of relationships, including romantic partners and friends (Bell,

Avery, Jenkins, Feld, & Schoenrock, 1985; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). While social interest and competence tap into motivational and behavioral domains as done in the present study, these are broader constructs that involved looking at a wider range of relationships for young adults, not just romantic. Therefore, the focus of how support in the parent-child relationship may have its influence on the young adults' romantic development may also need to address peer relationships.

### Young Adults' Romantic Development

Despite the inconsistencies within the body of literature and present study on how the parent-child relationship is related to young adults' romantic development, there are some associations for consideration. Young adults are often considered actively involved in the formation of romantic relationships and developmental tasks involving identity and intimacy. Erik Erikson (1968) identified college-age young adults as being faced with the issue of forming relationships and selecting mates. More recent research has investigated this process of development along with its impact from the parent-child relationship (Butcher, 1997; Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Based upon findings in the present study, it appears that parents may play a role in their young adults' motivation and exploration in romantic development, whereas that role is not as evident in romantic and sexual involvement. Nevertheless, the findings are not conclusive.

Regarding the romantic development variables, an important element to the research that may be missing is for what means exploration is taking place. The attachment and affiliation motivation has been considered in a positive and healthy light in this research, yet it is difficult to determine whether the exploration should be done so as well. It is possible that such exploratory behaviors are being done to establish sources of support and make the natural progression of

meeting additional needs from peers, or it may also be a tactic used for fulfilling needs not being met otherwise at home. Interestingly, dating and sexual exploration was positively correlated with sexual involvement in the present study. Throughout this study, exploration has been viewed as a positive reflection of young adults' romantic development, but it seems that future research would need to address for what purpose such behaviors are being used and whether it is something helpful or detrimental to development.

### Measuring Romantic Development

In part, mixed results from research studies measuring romantic development may be due to it being a broad, multi-faceted construct. Because of this, it is difficult to measure and may result in different “snapshots” depending upon how a research study is conducted and concepts are defined. Young adults, depending upon when the measurements are taken and how the constructs are presented, report varying levels of beliefs and involvement in romantic and sexual relationships (Feldman & Araujo, 1996).

For the present study, romantic development was conceptualized as having two dimensions, one that taps into motivation for and exploration about such relationships, the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance, and another that addresses actual behaviors that are romantic or sexual in nature, the Indicators of Romantic Involvement. These two dimensions have been identified in prior research (Graber, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Rader, 2001). Graber and colleagues made a distinction between research addressing romantic relationship expectations and relationship behaviors, though they did not directly address romantic exploration.

In the current study, the romantic development variables performed as expected in creating the two dimensions, indicated by the zero order correlations and the follow-up factor

analyses conducted. Dating and Sexual Exploration and Attachment/Affiliation Motivation were related and formed a cluster as the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance. Furthermore, the Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement and Sexual Involvement were related as the Indicators of Romantic Involvement. This is important in that it supports the notion that romantic development can be conceptualized with these two distinct clusters of variables, though it should be noted the variables were not always consistent in forming these two clusters through factor analyses in the present and prior studies (Rader & Campbell, 2001). Additionally, the way these variables related to each other sometimes varied by gender, as discussed in the next section.

Although these two dimensions of romantic development emerged in the current study, there was still a discrepancy in how the originally proposed measures of exploration in the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance performed. This illustrated the potential difficulty in measuring variables of romantic exploration. As previously mentioned, researchers Feldman and Araujo (1996) have determined the ways romantic development constructs are defined can lead to different results in research studies. In the present study, two measures of dating exploration were originally proposed. However, the construct of exploration appeared to be measuring different concepts, depending upon the instrument used. More specifically, the variables Dating and Sexual Exploration as measured by the Life Choices Questionnaire (© H. Grotevant, 1989, St. Paul, MN) and Dating Exploration as measured by the Exploration and Commitment Scale (George, 1996) would be expected to correlate highly with each other, as they are both exploration measures. However, this was not necessarily the case. In looking at responses from the total sample and then only the female participants, the variables were slightly correlated in a positive direction, but the relationship was not significant. Responses from male



participants provided a different picture, in which these two variables were significantly correlated. By looking at the questionnaire items closer, it appeared the Life Choices Questionnaire (LCQ) examined what exploratory activities participants were doing, but the Exploration and Commitment Scale (ECS) targeted whether ideas and views have been established or not, having already explored. In other words, the LCQ appeared to examine the exploration process, whereas the ECS tapped into the end results from exploring. Because of this, the ECS was not included in further analyses. This was an example in the present study how romantic development variables believed to measure the same construct might not actually do so. It is likely this occurs in the larger body of romantic development literature as well.

While romantic development has been identified as having at least these two dimensions for consideration, such a construct likely evolves and can vary by the participants' cohort and time of study. These factors could then influence the results and thus lead to different "snapshot" views based on various studies. Therefore, it should be kept in mind for future research that aspects of romantic development measured may be a reflection on how and when a study was performed, and not necessarily a real reflection on young adults' development. An optimal method for measuring romantic development would be a longitudinal study, following specific cohorts across time. This would shed more light on how attachment relationship importance and romantic involvement unfold for young adults in contrast to studies of varying samples and measurements.

#### Gender Differences

In the present study, it was expected that the effect of parental support would vary with participants' gender for indicators of attachment relationship importance but not romantic involvement. A fair amount of research indicates that according to gender, young adults

perceive support from their parents differently and their pace of romantic development varies as well. Based upon the results in this study, the effect of parental support did not vary with gender for the indicators of attachment relationship importance or romantic involvement. Furthermore, based upon the present study and contrary to prior research, it appears that perceptions of support in the parent-child relationship may not be significantly different for the genders. The gender differences that did exist were evidenced more in the variables of romantic development.

Much of the research indicates there is a gender difference in perceived parental support. In studies addressing young adults, women have described the affective quality of their parental attachment as more positive and their parents as having a greater role in providing emotional support, in comparison with men (Kenny, 1987, 1990; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988; Troll & Bengston, 1979). On the other hand, a smaller portion of studies suggest that young men and women are more similar than different in their perceptions of parents as sources of nurturance and attachment (Greenberg, Siegel, & Leitch, 1983; Kenny, 1994).

Because a majority of the research indicated a difference existed between young men and women in their perceptions of parental support, the present study examined gender. Yet, in the present study, most of the results indicated there was no significant difference in parental support. Support tapped into the extent to which the young adult perceives the parent as a source of assistance. Additionally, conflict and depth were examined as aspects of the parent-child relationship, and there was a gender difference with depth. Conflict tapped into the amount of conflict felt with the parent and how it impacted the supportive nature of the relationship. Depth tapped into the perceived importance of the relationship and impact it had on the young adult's life. The one significant difference was depth in the relationship with mother, in which women

indicated more. While this difference met criteria for statistical significance, the mean differences were not substantially large. Furthermore, depth and support were determined in preliminary analyses to greatly overlap in measuring the same construct, and support did not have a significant difference by gender.

Therefore, this study appears more consistent with the body of literature indicating there are no or few gender differences in parental support. It is hard to tell why this may be. Due to mixed findings, gender seems to be an important variable to continue considering when looking at family and romantic relationships, especially in the context of age. It seems appropriate to consider how relationships with parents may change differently for men and women as they transition from late adolescence to young adulthood.

Gender differences in romantic development were expected as well, given prior research (e.g., Roscoe, Diana & Brooks, 1987). Much of the prior research pertinent to the present study, which examined similar parent variables in relation to romantic development variables, have used only females in the participant pool (Butcher, 1997; Fullinwider-Bush & Jacobvitz, 1993; Rader, 2001). Therefore, in efforts to enhance the range of understanding in this area, both males and females were utilized in the present study.

The results of the present study provide support for gender differences in romantic development, but the significant differences should be considered in light of them being small. For instance, in looking at the demographic data, a significantly greater proportion of men than women reported their sexual orientation as homosexual. This difference does not appear to be substantially large, but it may be of importance to consider in future research. Among the other gender differences, women endorsed significantly more dating and sexual exploration than men, however the mean difference was relatively minimal. In regressions, gender was a significant

predictor for dating and sexual exploration, as well as sexual involvement. Women indicated more of this thinking and behaving. However, these regression models accounted for a very small amount of variance. Therefore, strong conclusions should not be made on the predictive power of gender on these areas of romantic development based upon the present study.

In looking at why other studies may have found a gender difference in romantic development, the way in which romantic development is defined and how research questions are asked may be a factor. For instance, Roscoe and colleagues (1987) found a gender difference in romantic exploration and behaviors. However, their research also asked participants why they were pursuing romance. Men's objective was sexuality, whereas women's was intimacy. In asking this question, additional information was gathered, and as discussed in the previous section, the way in which romantic development is defined and the questions are asked may have an impact on how participants respond.

Based upon Roscoe's research, there is some indication that considering the meaning young men and women attribute to the process of romantic development may be important for future research. While the present study examined the amount of exploration, motivation, and involvement, an additional research question pertains to why romance is or is not being pursued. This could shed more light not only on the process of romantic development, but also determine any gender differences more clearly.

Bigger picture, whether studying the parent-child relationship or young adults' romantic development, there are some indications that research instruments perform differently, based upon gender. While the measurements of the parent-child relationship variables appeared fairly consistent for both women and men in the present study, the ways in which the romantic development variables performed and how they interacted with the parent-child variables

demonstrated a few differences. For instance, paternal conflict may be a significant predictor for young adults' dating and sexual exploration. However, in looking closer at the zero order correlations between these two variables, they were positive and significantly related for women, but for men the relationship was slightly negative though not significant. This indicates that paternal conflict may be more of a factor for young women than men in predicting such exploratory behaviors, such as talking to others and reading about topics related to dating and sexual relationships. This is actually a contrary finding to the expectation in the present study that women perceiving greater parental support may place a greater importance of attachment relationships in their romantic development. Additionally, both romantic and sexual involvement were strongly and significantly correlated with each other for women and men, but the correlation was much stronger for women. Furthermore, dating and sexual exploration and attachment motivation were strongly and significantly correlated for both genders, but again, the correlation was stronger for women. This indicates that although there is not conclusive evidence for gender differences, there does seem to be some variability, and that is more consistent with the prior research indicating gender differences do exist.

Given that young women in the present study reported small but significantly greater amounts of depth with mother, dating and sexual exploration, and sexual involvement, one way to think about these findings uses Relational-Cultural Theory (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). Rooted in the work of Jean Baker Miller, this theory proposes a new framework for understanding women's development. Unlike individualistic models of self-development, which promote autonomy, separation, and self-sufficiency, Jordan and Hartling describe a process of growth and differentiation within relationships as key to healthy development. Connecting with others and being engaged in a mutually empathic and empowering relationship fosters well-being.

Therefore, the role relationships play in young adults' development, especially for young women, is an important consideration for exploring gender similarities and differences.

#### A Developmental Framework

Considering the evolution of relationships with primary caregivers and romantic partners is helpful in understanding the results of this study. Both theory and empirical research indicate that children usually look to their parents or primary caregivers as sources of support, but when becoming a young adult, a shift takes place in which romantic partners become the source (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985; Weiss, 1974). The present study did not directly test this developmental framework, as a longitudinal design would be necessary to empirically test such a shift taking place. However, in looking at the results of the present study with those from similar, prior studies, there are some indications for how young adults' relationships may be changing, along with the factors of age and time of data collection that should be considered in future research.

Although it was not originally a research question, follow-up analyses were performed to determine whether the present research sample was significantly older than the prior sample utilized by Rader (2001). Using attachment and social support theories as frameworks, the older average age among the present sample of female participants could explain why some of their endorsements on support in the parent-child relationship and romantic development were different from the prior study of younger participants with a younger average age. A cautious interpretation is the possibility that female participants used in the present study, along with being slightly older, may be relying less on their parents as a source of support, and instead they are seeking out romantic partners for such needs. Supporting this idea, responses from the present study indicated less parental support but more romantic involvement.

This being the case, attachment and social support theory would predict the young female adults in the present study, who are older and perceiving less support with their parents, would be more advanced in their romantic development to possibly find support from romantic partners. Results from the present study support this notion. Women reported less dating and sexual exploration as well as less motivation for attachment and affiliation in romantic relationships. On the other hand, they reported more romantic and sexual involvement.

Therefore, female participants in the present study, who were significantly older in age than Rader's (2001) prior study, may be fitting an evolving pattern in their development of relationships to parents and romantic partners. Unlike a slightly younger-aged woman who perceives more support in parent-child relationships and endorses less involvement in romantic relationships (Rader, 2001), the slightly older young women in the present study appear to perceive less support in the parent-child relationships but endorse more dating and sexual involvement in their romantic relationships. In addition to considering age, the young women in the present study may be further along in this developmental process. Young women in both studies indicated some dating and sexual exploration along with attachment and affiliation motivation for romantic relationships. However, women in the present study appear to have moved more forward from thinking about, exploring, and identifying motivations for such relationships, and instead, they are actually engaging in more of the involving behaviors. Linking this to theories of attachment and social support, the developing young adult may be transferring a focus from parents to romantic partners by focusing and engaging in such relationships. In both theories, it is suggested that children gradually shift resources for having their needs met from parents to romantic partners (Ainsworth, 1989; Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Weiss, 1974).

Another factor that should also be considered is time of data collection when examining developmental transitions made by young adults. In the research conducted by Shaver, Furman, and Buhrmester (1985), there is evidence to believe a shift takes place during the academic school year, in which the quality of relationships with parents and peers change from the fall to the spring. This is especially pertinent to college freshman, who are not only building a new social support system at school, but also renegotiating relations with family and friends back home. It is a time that often includes a transition of leaving home, moving into an apartment or dormitory without adult supervision, attending large lecture classes, and being faced with the task of building new social ties. Shaver, Furman, and Buhrmester found that relationships with family members improved from the fall into the spring, as though a newly found appreciation occurred for those older relationships. The researchers were not sure why that happened. However, they also determined that old and new relationships with peers, including friendships, romances, and participation in organizations, declined dramatically in the autumn and rose again by spring. Similarly, Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) found that freshmen tended to be lonely in the autumn, but most of them had recovered by the end of freshman year, as evidenced by the formation of new friendships and romantic relationships.

While these studies were examining the freshman year, and the present study was looking at a range of college years for students of a traditional age, the results imply that the time of data collection may make a difference in the reporting of social support networks with family and peers, depending upon whether it is fall or spring. In looking back at Rader's (2001) study, the data were collected in the fall and indicated more parental support with less romantic involvement. Data in the present study were collected in the spring, and there was less reported parental support but more romantic involvement. As considered earlier in this section, age may



be an important factor in explaining why this is, but it is also possible that in part, the time of year the data are collected may reflect a change in social networks that occurs across the school year. In order to test this more directly, a longitudinal study would follow a cohort of young adults with multiple measures across the school year.

### Measurement Issues

The approach utilized for collecting data can have an influence on the results. Therefore, it is important to address any measurement issues. Some measurement issues already discussed include the complexity in measuring the construct of romantic development, which may be defined and asked about in different ways. In addition to addressing this further, an additional consideration includes how aspects of the parent-child relationship are measured.

In the present study, the independent variables pertained to the parent-child relationship and the participants' gender. The dependent variables tapped into romantic development. As a broad overview, a stronger case can be made in support of the measurements used for the independent variables in contrast to the dependent variable measures, especially those considering romantic and sexual involvement. This is largely because these involvement measures consisted of fewer items that did not have as strong internal consistency.

In examining the parent-child relationship, the support, conflict, and depth variables appear to be consistent in their measurements and tap into the expected constructs, as determined by internal consistency measures and correlations between the variables (Butcher, 1997; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991; Rader, 2001). All three variables, as they pertain to mother and father, have a high internal consistency for this measure, indicating good reliability. Additionally, support and depth are positively related to each other and negatively related to conflict, indicating convergent and discriminant validity where expected.

On the other hand, the dependent variables may not have been as strong in their purported measures. Their internal consistency and apparent validity varied, depending upon the instrument and which aspects of romantic development were measured. The Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance correlated most highly with each other, as did the Indicators of Romantic Involvement, which demonstrated some degree of convergent validity. However, the validity should be viewed cautiously because in some cases there were smaller, but still significant correlations between variables in these two clusters. If they were truly measuring two different dimensions of romantic development, that would not be the case. Regarding reliability, the Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance appear more solid than the Indicators of Romantic Involvement. The exploration and motivation measures demonstrated a high internal consistency. On the other hand, the romantic involvement measures had the lowest internal consistency measures of all the variables used in the study. Both of these measures consisted of only three questions, devised by Butcher (1997). It would be expected that internal consistency would not be as strong, because participants were only answering three questions for each measure. Romantic and sexual involvements were not addressed as extensively as the other measures used in the study, which consisted of many more items. Nevertheless, the involvement measures do not have as strong of support for reliability and validity as the other research instruments. Additional studies would benefit from using measures of romantic and sexual involvement that are more statistically sound.

#### Limitations

Characteristics of the method and design limit the generalizability or external validity of the results. These include the attributes of the participants, subjective responses to the

questionnaires, questionable validity and low internal consistency of some of the research instruments, and suppressor effects among the variables utilized.

The age range (18-22) of the participants was limited to maintain a focus in the research at an early stage of romantic development while parents are thought to continue playing a key role in their young adults' lives. Furthermore, the young adults in the present sample were college students. Such adults who are not in college may present a different picture in terms of parent-child relationships and romantic development.

In gathering information for the present study, the perceptions of young women and men as they responded to questionnaires were explored. Their indications of the quality of relationships in their family, motivation for romantic relationships, and actual romantic and sexual behaviors were subjective. However, it was most important in the present study to understand how the young adults perceived their relationships and experiences. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that an objective view of their relationships and behaviors was not gained by the methodology used.

Regarding romantic relationship development, as discussed in the previous section, the Indicators of Romantic Involvement appear to be the least solid measures used. Due to their low internal consistency, their validity or ability to measure what was expected may be questionable. In general, measures comprised of more items and higher internal consistency would carry less doubt in future studies.

Finally, the measurements from many of the variables used in this study were highly correlated, especially in examining the quality of relationships between young adults and their mothers and their fathers. However, this also occurred among the romantic development variables within each of their clusters, Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance and

Indicators of Romantic Involvement. Because of this, variables overlapped each other in some cases. When somewhat redundant variables are used in a hierarchical regression analysis, suppressor effects can occur. This means the variables can enhance each other's effects in creating significant results. This can be problematic, because some significant results may have occurred largely due to suppressor effects, rather than actual real-world effects. In that case, if the study were performed again with another similar sample, the results could be different. This is because the manner in which the participants report their relationships is linked to suppressor effects. In other words, the ways in which variables enhanced each other could be different with another sample. In order to generate results that are generalizable, a large sample is important to study. Although this study included 157 young women and 144 young men in the regression analyses, an even larger sample in the future would help avoid unique results from one study, simply due to suppressor effects.

#### Further Research

A major purpose of the present study was aimed at understanding how the supportive quality of the parent-child relationship influenced variables of romantic development. Attachment and social support theories provided a framework for understanding how relationships with parents and romantic partners evolve. As discussed in prior sections, considerations for future research include the young adults' age, the quality of the parents' relationship with each other, the quality of peer relationships, how terms are defined in the research instruments, and the time of data collection. Additional considerations include directly measuring young adults' development and evolving relationships with parents and romantic partners through a longitudinal design. Furthermore, future research could more closely assess

what functions romantic partners serve in such relationships, in order to determine whether romantic partners are truly seen as a stronger source of support over time.

The scope of the current study is limited in looking at romantic development. However, it does appear that age plays an important role. As young adults age, their thinking about romantic relationships and behaviors may change as a function of maturation, not just the support in the parent-child relationship. Additionally, young adults attending college are experiencing many changes in their social networks, including relations with peers and friends. Therefore, these relationships should be taken into consideration, as they may provide a clearer context for measuring sources of support with parents and romantic partners.

Although this study, along with prior research (e.g. Rader, 2001) indicates a “shift” takes place from parents being the primary source of support to eventually romantic partners as the source, this was not directly measured. Participants endorsed items indicating support in the parent-child relationship along with importance and involvement in romantic relationships, but the one-time surveys administered cannot assess such a developmental phenomenon. In order to truly see the participants changing their relationships with parents and partners, multiple administrations of measures would be needed. Furthermore, if the notion of support sources changing with time is going to be investigated, measures need to be utilized that not only address the support in parent-child relationships, but also in romantic relationships. The present study examined motivational and behavioral components to romantic relationships, but support from such partners was not measured. In order to be more direct in testing the applicability of attachment and social support theories to young adults’ relationships with parents and romantic partners, the element of support needs to be examined over time in both kinds of relationships in studies that are longitudinal in nature.

Also discussed in the Measurement Issues and Limitations sections, the measures used for the variables examining romantic development should be chosen carefully for future research. Not only should they examine the support from such partners, but also these measures should have stronger internal consistency and demonstrate expected relationships to other measures of the same constructs to be more certain they are measuring what is intended.

It is important we continue to study the role of the parent-child relationship and how this relates to the young adults' development. In being consistent with prior research, the present study indicates that parents do continue to be an important source of support and play a key role in their children's approaches to romantic relationships. By continuing to learn more about what occurs and how the process unfolds, appropriate interventions can be formulated for promoting optimum development in young adults as they continue their relationships with parents and initiate relationships with romantic partners.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
LETTER OF INFORMATION  
(INFORMED CONSENT)



## Letter of Information

This study will explore college students' relationships. It is hoped that the results will increase our understanding of young adult development. Participation will involve completing questionnaires, which will take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour of your time. If you choose to participate in this study, your answers will be kept confidential. There is minimal risk involved in the study. However, you may also decide not to participate at any point. Should any aspect of participation make you uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits should you choose to do so.

The questionnaires each contain instructions, which are self-explanatory. It is very important that you answer every question and that you be completely honest in your answers. Information you provide will be useful only if it truly describes you, so please answer questions accurately. Your answers will be kept completely confidential. Do not write your name on any part of these questionnaires. You will receive a copy of this Letter of Information for your records.

To receive a summary of the results of this study, send your request with a self-addressed stamped envelope to Heather L.N. Rader, c/o Dr. Vicki Campbell at the Psychology Department.

If you are willing to participate, please continue in filling out the questionnaires. In doing so, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your participation.

Heather L.N. Rader, Graduate Student  
Counseling Psychology Program  
Psychology Department  
University of North Texas  
Dr. Vicki Campbell (Faculty Supervisor)  
Phone: (940) 565-2671

**4 Digit Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*This project was reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, (940) 565-3940.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRES

Personal Data Questionnaire and Relationship Biography

INSTRUCTIONS: In the space next to the items below, please enter the number that best answers the question. Fill in information when requested in the spaces provided. Please answer every item.

\_\_\_\_\_ AGE

\_\_\_\_\_ GENDER

1. female
2. male

\_\_\_\_\_ YEAR OF BIRTH (e.g., 70 if born in 1970)

\_\_\_\_\_ CLASS

1. freshman
2. sophomore
3. junior
4. senior
5. graduate student
6. other

\_\_\_\_\_ GRADE POINT AVERAGE (e.g. 3.0)

\_\_\_\_\_ ETHNIC/RACIAL BACKGROUND

1. African American
2. Native American
3. Caucasian
4. Asian
5. Hispanic
6. other

\_\_\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

1. Protestant
2. Catholic
3. Jewish
4. Islamic
5. Eastern religions
6. None
7. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ CURRENT LIVING SITUATION

1. with both parents at parents' home
2. with one parent at parent's home
3. alone in house/apt.
4. with other(s) in house/apt.
5. in residence hall

\_\_\_\_\_ WHAT PERCENT OF YOUR LIVING EXPENSES DO YOU PAY?

1. 0 %
2. 0 - 25%
3. 26 - 50%
4. 51 - 75%
5. 76 - 100%

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU WORK AT A JOB EACH WEEK?

1. more than 35 hours a week
2. 25-35 hours
3. 15-24 hours
4. less than 15 hours
5. not employed

\_\_\_\_\_ MY BIOLOGICAL PARENTS ARE:

1. married, living together
2. married, living apart
3. divorced, mother remarried
4. divorced, father remarried
5. divorced, both remarried
6. divorced, neither remarried
7. both parents deceased
8. mother deceased
9. father deceased
10. never married
11. other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ MY MOTHER HAS BEEN MARRIED:

1. never
2. only one time
3. two times
4. more than three times

\_\_\_\_\_ MY FATHER HAS BEEN MARRIED:

1. never
2. only one time
3. two times
4. more than three times

**Answer the next four questions only if your parents are divorced.**

\_\_\_\_\_ WHAT YEAR DID YOUR PARENTS DIVORCE? (e.g., 75 if 1975)

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THE TIME OF YOUR PARENT'S DIVORCE?

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW MANY TIMES HAS YOUR MOTHER BEEN MARRIED?

1. only one time
2. twice
3. three or more times

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW MANY TIMES HAS YOUR FATHER BEEN MARRIED?

1. only one time
2. twice
3. three or more times

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW CLOSE IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FATHER?

1. extremely
  2. very
  3. somewhat
  4. not very
  5. not at all
- 

\_\_\_\_\_ IF YOU DO NOT LIVE WITH YOUR FATHER, HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE HIM?

1. about once a week
2. about once a month
3. about once every few months
4. about once a year
5. about once every few years
6. never

\_\_\_\_\_ HOW CLOSE IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MOTHER?

1. extremely
2. very
3. somewhat
4. not very
5. not at all

\_\_\_\_\_ IF YOU DO NOT LIVE WITH YOUR MOTHER, HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE HER?

1. about once a week
2. about once a month
3. about once every few months
4. about once a year
5. about once every few years
6. never

\_\_\_\_\_ FATHER'S OCCUPATION (current or most recent)

1. professional
2. managerial
3. sales
4. trained worker
5. laborer
6. does not work outside the home
7. unknown

\_\_\_\_\_ MOTHER'S OCCUPATION (current or most recent)

1. professional
2. managerial
3. sales
4. trained worker
5. laborer
6. does not work outside the home
7. unknown

For the next two questions use the scale below to indicate highest year of education completed in numbers

High School	College	Master's	Doctoral
9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16	17 18	19 20+

\_\_\_\_\_ FATHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

\_\_\_\_\_ MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

\_\_\_\_\_ As compared to your relationship when you were a child, how would you describe your relationship with your **mother** now?

1. Much better
2. Slightly better
3. About the same
4. Slightly worse
5. Much worse

\_\_\_\_\_ As compared to your relationship when you were a child, how would you describe your relationship with your **father** now?

1. Much better
2. Slightly better
3. About the same
4. Slightly worse
5. Much worse

The next two questions are asking you to consider the people you think of as your parents who have influenced you the most (whether they are biological parents, step-parents, adopted parents, or other).

\_\_\_\_\_ WHEN YOU THINK OF YOUR MOM, IS SHE

1. your biological mother
2. an adopted mother
3. a stepmother
4. other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ WHEN YOU THINK OF YOUR DAD, IS HE

1. your biological father
2. an adopted father
3. a stepfather
4. other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ YOUR OWN RELATIONSHIP STATUS

1. currently married
2. currently separated
3. divorced
4. widowed
5. single, long-term relationship
6. single, actively dating
7. single, not actively dating

\_\_\_\_\_ At what age did you first fall in love?

1. 10-13 years old
2. 14-16 years old
3. 17-18 years old
4. 19-20 years old
5. 21 years or older
6. I have never fallen in love.

\_\_\_\_\_ At what age did you have your first consensual sexual experience?

1. 10-13 years old
2. 14-16 years old
3. 17-18 years old
4. 19-20 years old
5. 21 years or older
6. I have not had a first consensual sexual experience.

\_\_\_\_\_ How many romantic relationships have you been involved in?

1. 0
2. 1-3
3. 4-6
4. 7-10
5. 10-15
6. 15-20
7. More than 20

\_\_\_\_\_ How many romantic relationships have you had in which you felt like you were “in love.”

1. 0
2. 1-3
3. 4-6
4. 7-10
5. 10-15
6. 15-20
7. More than 20

\_\_\_\_\_ How many previous sexual relationships have you been involved in?

1. 0
2. 1-3
3. 4-6
4. 7-10
5. 10-15
6. 15-20
7. More than 20



\_\_\_\_\_ How many times have you been in love with more than one person at the same time?

1. 0
2. 1-3
3. 4-6
4. More than 6 times

\_\_\_\_\_ Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?

1. Yes
2. No

\_\_\_\_\_ If so, how long have you been involved with your partner?

1. Less than 3 months
2. 3 to 6 months
3. 7 to 12 months
4. 1 year to 2 years
5. More than 2 years
6. Not involved in a relationship

\_\_\_\_\_ If you are currently involved in a romantic relationship, is your current relationship a sexual relationship?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not involved in a relationship

\_\_\_\_\_ If you are currently in a romantic relationship, are you in love with your current partner?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not involved in a relationship

\_\_\_\_\_ If you are currently in a romantic relationship, are you living with your current partner?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not involved in a relationship

\_\_\_\_\_ Have you had a relationship break-up within the past year?

1. Yes
2. No

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you think about forming a long-term, committed relationship or getting married in the future?

1. Yes
2. No

\_\_\_\_\_ At what age might you form this long-term, committed relationship or marriage? (Please put 00 if you think you will never have such a romantic relationship.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Regarding your sexual/romantic relationship orientation, do you consider yourself:

1. Heterosexual
2. Homosexual
3. Bisexual
4. None of the above

\_\_\_\_\_ For your mother's (or the woman who acted as your mother, sexual/romantic relationship orientation) do you consider her:

1. Heterosexual
2. Homosexual
3. Bisexual
4. None of the above

\_\_\_\_\_ For your father's (or the man who acted as your father) sexual/romantic relationship orientation, do you consider him:

1. Heterosexual
2. Homosexual
3. Bisexual
4. None of the above

Please answer the following 7 questions, **only if you are currently in a romantic relationship**. Answer according to the scale preceding each question.

Not Well At all		Average		Very Well
1	2	3	4	5

\_\_\_\_\_ How well does your partner meet your needs?

Low Satisfaction		Medium Satisfaction		High Satisfaction
1	2	3	4	5
_____	In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?			
Very Poor		Average		Very Good
1	2	3	4	5
_____	How good is your relationship compared to most?			
Very Often		Occasionally		Never
1	2	3	4	5
_____	How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?			
Not Well At all		Average		Very Well
1	2	3	4	5
_____	To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?			
Not at All		Average		Very Much
1	2	3	4	5
_____	How much do you love your partner?			
Very Many		Average		Very Few
1	2	3	4	5
_____	How many problems are there in your relationship?			

## Quality of Relationships Inventory

Each of the following statements asks about your feelings about your mother or the woman who has acted as your mother. If you have more than one person acting as your mother (e.g. a natural mother and a step-mother) answer the questions for the one you feel has most influenced you. Please read each statement and select the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you now, using the scale below.

---

1	2	3	4
Not at all	A Little	Quite a bit	Very Much

---

1. \_\_\_\_\_ To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflicts with this person?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?
6. \_\_\_\_\_ How much does this person make you feel guilty?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ How much do you have to "Give in" in this relationship?
8. \_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?
9. \_\_\_\_\_ How much does this person want you to change?
10. \_\_\_\_\_ How positive a role does this person play in your life?
11. \_\_\_\_\_ How significant is this relationship in your life?
12. \_\_\_\_\_ How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?
13. \_\_\_\_\_ How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?
14. \_\_\_\_\_ How critical of you is this person?
15. \_\_\_\_\_ If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?

---

1	2	3	4
Not at all	A Little	Quite a bit	Very Much

---

- 16.\_\_\_\_\_ How responsible do you feel for this person's well being?
- 17.\_\_\_\_\_ How much do you depend on this person?
- 18.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?
- 19.\_\_\_\_\_ How much would you like this person to change?
- 20.\_\_\_\_\_ How angry does this person make you feel?
- 21.\_\_\_\_\_ How much do you argue with this person?
- 22.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?
- 23.\_\_\_\_\_ How often does this person make you feel angry?
- 24.\_\_\_\_\_ How often does this person try to control or influence your life?
- 25.\_\_\_\_\_ How much more do you give than you get from this relationship?

Now answer each of the following statements according to your feelings about your father or the man who has acted as your father. If you have more than one person acting as your father (e.g. a natural father and a step-father) answer the questions for the one you feel has most influenced you. Please read each statement and select the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you now, using the scale below.

---

1	2	3	4
Not at all	A Little	Quite a bit	Very Much

---

- 1.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?
- 2.\_\_\_\_\_ How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflicts with this person?
- 3.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?
- 4.\_\_\_\_\_ How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?

---

1	2	3	4
Not at all	A Little	Quite a bit	Very Much

---

- 5.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?
- 6.\_\_\_\_\_ How much does this person make you feel guilty?
- 7.\_\_\_\_\_ How much do you have to “Give in” in this relationship?
- 8.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?
- 9.\_\_\_\_\_ How much does this person want you to change?
- 10.\_\_\_\_\_ How positive a role does this person play in your life?
- 11.\_\_\_\_\_ How significant is this relationship in your life?
- 12.\_\_\_\_\_ How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?
- 13.\_\_\_\_\_ How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?
- 14.\_\_\_\_\_ How critical of you is this person?
- 15.\_\_\_\_\_ If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?
- 16.\_\_\_\_\_ How responsible do you feel for this person's well being?
- 17.\_\_\_\_\_ How much do you depend on this person?
- 18.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?
- 19.\_\_\_\_\_ How much would you like this person to change?
- 20.\_\_\_\_\_ How angry does this person make you feel?
- 21.\_\_\_\_\_ How much do you argue with this person?

---

1	2	3	4
Not at all	A Little	Quite a bit	Very Much

---

22.\_\_\_\_\_ To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?

23.\_\_\_\_\_ How often does this person make you feel angry?

24.\_\_\_\_\_ How often does this person try to control or influence your life?

25.\_\_\_\_\_ How much more do you give than you get from this relationship?









## Exploration and Commitment Scales

The following questions ask you to respond to two separate scales in eight content areas.

**Area 1:** Consider your views on **occupation**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

### Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

### Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 2:** Consider your views on **politics**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

### Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 3:** Consider your views on **religion**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 4:** Consider your views on **your lifestyle**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 5:** Consider your views on **dating**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 6:** Consider your views on **friendship**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 7:** Consider your views on **the roles of men and women**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.

**Area 8:** Consider your views on **recreation**. Please circle the number on each scale below that best describes you now.

Scale 1

1	2	3	4	5
I haven't really thought about it, and it doesn't concern me now.	I haven't really thought about it, but I'm beginning to look into it.	I've thought about it and have begun to look in it.	I've thought about it a lot and have read and/or talked to several sources and I'm beginning to understand several perspectives about it.	I've thought about it a lot. I've read and/or talked to a variety of sources about it and believe I understand several perspectives about it.

Scale 2

1	2	3	4
I don't have any set ideas about it yet.	I'm not sure yet, although I've considered a few options. I still change my mind often.	I have somewhat firm ideas about what I want, but I might change my mind later on.	I'm certain of what I want and I'll continue to feel the way I do now in the future.



## Life Choices Questionnaire

On the next page, we are interested in finding out how actively you have been exploring different ideas and life choices in several different areas (e.g., occupation, religion, politics, relationships, etc.).

For each of the 12 areas listed down the left side of the page, think about whether you have considered choices by using any of the strategies listed across the top of the page. In each square, please rate your own degree of exploration of that area **during the past month** by that strategy on a scale of 1 to 5.

---

A rating of 1 (lowest) means that you have really not used that strategy of exploration at all in that area during the past month

A rating of 2 is between 1 and 3.

A rating of 3 (moderate) means that you have considered choices in that area to some moderate degree during the past month

A rating of 4 is between 3 and 5.

A rating of 5 (highest) means that you have actively and seriously used the exploration strategy listed during the past month in that area.

---

Complete the following page by considering each row all the way across. In other words, respond to all the choices about “occupation” before moving down to the next row, which concerns “religion.”

In the first block, place a number from 1 to 5 to indicate the degree to which you have **thought about** your **career or occupation** (both present and future) during the past month. A “1” means that you haven’t thought about it at all. A “5” means that you have been giving it very serious thought during the past month. A “3” is an in between rating: you have been thinking about it to a moderate degree. In the second block, respond to how much you have been **talking with others** about your **career or occupation**. And so on...

Remember to use the past month as your time frame when responding to these questions.

Please do not look back to your responses to previous questions as you respond to the questions on the next page.

**1**  
**Not Used**

**3**  
**Used to a Moderate Degree**

**5**  
**Actively & Seriously Used**

	Thought about the topic.	Talked with others about topic.	Tried to develop new ideas about topic.	Searched for new & different ways to deal with topic.	Compared your ideas with those of others.	Tried to find better ideas about the topic.	Searched for more info. on topic.	Found out what others think about topic.	Read about topic.	Talked with people who should be experts in topic.	Gained first hand experience with topic.
OCCUPATION: Your career occupation, line of work – both present and future employment.											
RELIGION: Your beliefs, ideas, and values about your religious and spiritual commitments. Could involve commitment to organized religion, or of a more personal nature.											
POLITICS: Your values and ideas about political, governmental, and societal issues.											
MYSELF AS A FRIEND: How you view yourself in relation to your friends. What does it mean to be a friend?											
MYSELF IN DATING OR CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: How you think about yourself and how you relate to others in close relationships?.											
MYSELF AS A ROMANTIC PARTNER: Your thinking about yourself and how you are/would relate to a long-term, committed or marriage partner.											
MYSELF AS A PARENT: Your behavior and feelings as a parent, or future parent; your approaches to child-rearing.											
MYSELF AS AN ADULT CHILD OF MY PARENTS: Your behavior and feelings regarding your parents and your involvement with them.											
FAMILY ROLES: Your thinking about various demands of family life (e.g., work, child-rearing) and how they can be handled, balanced, or prioritized											
LEISURE/RECREATION: Your decisions about ways in which you like to spend your leisure time.											
ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUAL EXPRESSION: Your thinking about your own sexuality and sexual behavior.											
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES: Your thinking about the personality qualities and behaviors that are appropriate for men and women in society.											

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APPENDIX C  
TABLES AND FIGURE

Table 1

## Frequencies for Demographics and Relationship Information

Variables	Female <i>n</i>	Male <i>n</i>	$X^2$	Total <i>n</i>	%
Age	Total Sample ( <i>n</i> =301; female <i>n</i> =157; male <i>n</i> =144)				
18	33	34		67	22.3
19	50	36		86	28.6
20	28	29		57	18.9
21	29	26		55	18.3
22	17	19	2.0	36	12.0
Gender					
Female	157	0		157	52.2
Male	0	144		144	47.8
Ethnicity					
African American	19	17		36	12.0
Native American	0	1		1	0.3
Caucasian	109	105		214	71.1
Asian	3	8		11	3.7
Hispanic	24	12		36	12.0
Other	2	1	7.2	3	1.0
Current Living Situation					
With both parents at home	25	17		42	14.0
With one parent at home	6	8		14	4.7
Alone in house/apt.	16	17		33	11.0
With others in house/apt.	54	48		102	33.9
In residence hall	56	54	1.7	110	36.5
Biological Parents' Marital Status					
Married, living together	88	92		180	59.8
Married, living apart	5	2		7	2.3
Divorced, mother remarried	13	9		22	7.3
Divorced, father remarried	15	7		22	7.3
Divorced, both remarried	9	8		17	5.6
Divorced, neither remarried	8	13		21	7.0
Never married	3	3		6	2.0
Other	8	13	7.9	21	7.0
Closeness to Mother					
Extremely	54	37		91	31.5
Very	61	61		122	40.5
Somewhat	33	33		66	21.9
Not very	3	5		8	2.7
Not at all	1	1	2.9	2	0.7

(Table continues)

Table 1 (cont)

## Frequencies for Demographics and Relationship Information

Variables	Female <i>n</i>	Male <i>n</i>	$X^2$	Total <i>n</i>	%
<b>Closeness to Father</b>					
Extremely	14	11		25	8.3
Very	25	19		44	14.6
Somewhat	29	26		55	18.3
Not very	18	9		27	9.0
Not at all	10	7	1.5	17	5.6
<b>Relationship with Mother as Compared to Childhood</b>					
Much better	52	30		82	27.2
Slightly better	33	31		64	21.3
About the same	51	58		109	36.2
Slightly worse	16	20		36	12.0
Much worse	3	5	7.0	8	2.7
<b>Relationship with Father as Compared to Childhood</b>					
Much better	26	37		63	20.9
Slightly better	37	47		84	27.9
About the same	50	29		79	26.2
Slightly worse	22	18		40	23.3
Much worse	17	10	10.5*	27	9.0
<b>Person Regarded as Mother</b>					
Biological mother	151	140		291	96.7
Adopted mother	1	3		4	1.3
Stepmother	2	0		2	0.7
Other	3	1	3.9	4	1.3
<b>Person Regarded as Father</b>					
Biological father	141	131		272	90.4
Adopted father	2	2		4	1.3
Stepfather	10	6		16	5.3
Other	4	5	0.9	9	3.0
<b>Currently in Romantic Relationship</b>					
Yes	96	64		160	53.2
No	61	80	8.4**	141	46.8

(Table continues)

Table 1 (cont)

## Frequencies for Demographics and Relationship Information

Variables	Female <i>n</i>	Male <i>n</i>	$X^2$	Total <i>n</i>	%
Relationship Status					
Currently married	4	1		5	1.7
Currently separated	0	1		1	0.3
Divorced	1	0		1	0.3
Widowed	0	0		0	0.0
Single, long-term relationship	66	49		115	38.2
Single, actively dating	49	35		84	27.9
Single, not actively dating	37	58	12.8*	95	31.6
If in relationship, length of relationship					
Less than 3 months	13	6		19	6.3
3 to 6 months	10	15		25	8.3
7 to 12 months	25	13		38	12.6
1 year to 2 years	21	18		39	13.0
More than 2 years	27	14	13.0*	41	13.6
Think about long-term relationship					
Yes	147	132		279	92.7
No	8	12	1.2	20	6.6
Age of initiating long-term relationship					
18	1	2		3	1.0
19	2	3		5	1.7
20	10	4		14	4.7
21	7	10		17	5.6
22	19	10		29	9.6
23	20	12		32	10.6
24	13	15		28	9.3
25	45	29		74	24.6
26	12	14		26	8.6
27	9	13		22	7.3
28	5	7		12	4.0
29	1	2		3	1.0
30	6	9		15	5.0
33	1	0		1	0.3
35	2	3		5	1.7
36	0	1		1	0.3
40	0	1		1	0.3
Never	3	7	18.4	10	3.3

(Table continues)

Table 1 (cont)

## Frequencies for Demographics and Relationship Information

Variables	Female <i>n</i>	Male <i>n</i>	$X^2$	Total <i>n</i>	%
Own sexual orientation					
Heterosexual	149	123		272	90.4
Homosexual	2	10		12	4.0
Bisexual	4	6		10	3.3
None of the above	2	4	8.3*	6	2.0
Mother's sexual orientation					
Heterosexual	155	140		295	98.0
Homosexual	1	0		1	0.3
Bisexual	0	0		0	0.0
None of the above	1	4	3.0	5	1.7
Father's sexual orientation					
Heterosexual	155	138		293	97.3
Homosexual	1	0		1	0.3
Bisexual	0	1		1	0.3
None of the above	1	4	4.1	5	1.7

*Note.* Chi-Square Tests of Independence examined whether there was a statistical relationship between gender and each variable, as noted by \* $=p \leq .05$  and \*\* $=p \leq .01$ .

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Range of Scores for the Total Sample, Female Participants, and Male Participants on the Original Parent-Child Relationship Variables

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> Difference for Genders	Possible Range	Range
<u>Parent-Child Relationship Variables</u>					
<u>Mother</u>					
<b>Support (total sample)</b>	<b>23.11</b>	<b>4.11</b>		<b>7 – 28</b>	<b>7 – 28</b>
Females	23.54	4.13			
Males	22.65	4.06	0.89		
<b>Conflict (total sample)</b>	<b>25.16</b>	<b>7.67</b>		<b>12 – 48</b>	<b>12 – 48</b>
Females	25.37	7.67			
Males	24.94	7.69	0.43		
<b>Depth (total sample)</b>	<b>19.83</b>	<b>3.55</b>		<b>6 – 24</b>	<b>7 – 24</b>
Females	20.49	3.20			
Males	19.12	3.78	1.37***		
<u>Father</u>					
<b>Support (total sample)</b>	<b>20.05</b>	<b>5.95</b>		<b>7 – 28</b>	<b>7 – 28</b>
Females	19.73	6.21			
Males	20.39	5.66	0.66		
<b>Conflict (total sample)</b>	<b>25.24</b>	<b>8.33</b>		<b>12 – 48</b>	<b>12 – 48</b>
Females	25.03	8.65			
Males	25.46	8.00	0.43		
<b>Depth (total sample)</b>	<b>17.44</b>	<b>4.94</b>		<b>6 – 24</b>	<b>6 – 24</b>
Females	17.48	5.06			
Males	17.41	4.82	0.07		

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . The Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are taken from the Quality of Relationships Inventory.



Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and Range of Scores for the Total Sample, Female Participants, and Male Participants on Romantic Development Variables

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> Difference for Genders	Possible Range	Range
<u>Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance</u>					
<b>Dating and Sexual Exploration (total sample)</b>	<b>32.51</b>	<b>10.11</b>		<b>10 – 50</b>	<b>10 – 50</b>
Females	34.11	9.61			
Males	30.80	10.39	3.31**		
<b>Dating Exploration (total sample)</b>	<b>7.20</b>	<b>1.64</b>		<b>2 – 9</b>	<b>2 – 9</b>
Females	7.34	1.60			
Males	7.06	1.68	0.28		
<b>Attachment and Affiliation Motivation (total sample)</b>	<b>170.40</b>	<b>20.55</b>		<b>43 – 215</b>	<b>98 – 214</b>
Females	171.56	18.77			
Males	169.17	22.27	2.39		
<u>Indicators of Romantic Involvement</u>					
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement (total sample)</b>	<b>8.09</b>	<b>2.29</b>		<b>3 – 20</b>	<b>3 – 16</b>
Females	8.27	2.10			
Males	7.90	2.48	0.37		
<b>Sexual Involvement (total sample)</b>	<b>7.98</b>	<b>3.02</b>		<b>3 – 16</b>	<b>3 – 16</b>
Females	8.26	2.81			
Males	7.66	3.21	0.60		

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . The Dating Exploration and Sexual Expression subscales, combined to form the Dating and Sexual Exploration measure, are taken from the Life Choices Questionnaire © (Harold D. Grotevant, 2003). The additional Dating Exploration subscale is taken from the Exploration and Commitment Scale. The Attachment and Affiliation Motivation is taken from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale. Other items were designed for use in this study, based on prior research.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and t-Tests for the Female Participants and Total Sample in the Present Study in Comparison to the Female Participants from Prior Research (Rader, 2001) on Variables Representing Age, the Parent-Child Relationship, and Romantic Development

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> Difference in Comparison to Rader, 2001 Females	<i>t</i> Test
<b>Age (total sample)</b>	19.69	1.32	0.59	3.64 <sup>***</sup>
Females	19.66	1.29	0.56	4.47 <sup>***</sup>
Females (Rader, 2001)	19.10	1.35		
<u>Parent-Child Relationship Variables</u>				
<u>Mother</u>				
<b>Support (total sample)</b>	23.11	4.11	0.81	-3.85 <sup>***</sup>
Females	23.54	4.13	0.38	-1.59
Females (Rader, 2001)	23.92	4.27		
<b>Conflict (total sample)</b>	25.16	7.67	0.10	0.35
Females	25.37	7.67	0.31	1.32
Females (Rader, 2001)	25.06	7.74		
<b>Depth (total sample)</b>	19.83	3.55	1.13	-6.11 <sup>***</sup>
Females	20.49	3.20	0.57	-2.27 <sup>*</sup>
Females (Rader, 2001)	20.96	3.13		
<u>Father</u>				
<b>Support (total sample)</b>	20.05	5.95	0.94	-3.94 <sup>***</sup>
Females	19.73	6.21	1.26	-4.54 <sup>***</sup>
Females (Rader, 2001)	20.99	5.21		
<b>Conflict (total sample)</b>	25.24	8.33	0.47	1.56
Females	25.03	8.65	0.26	0.75
Females (Rader, 2001)	24.77	8.89		
<b>Depth (total sample)</b>	17.44	4.94	1.69	-7.62 <sup>***</sup>
Females	17.48	5.06	1.65	-6.46 <sup>***</sup>
Females (Rader, 2001)	19.13	4.58		

(Table continues)

Table 4 (cont)

Means, Standard Deviations and t-Tests for the Female Participants and Total Sample in the Present Study in Comparison to the Female Participants from Prior Research (Rader, 2001) on Variables Representing Age, the Parent-Child Relationship, and Romantic Development

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> Difference in Comparison to Rader, 2001 Females	<i>t</i> Test
<u>Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance</u>				
<b>Dating Exploration-LCQ (total sample)</b>	34.86	10.59	4.51	-13.11***
Females	37.43	10.05	1.94	-5.05***
Females (Rader, 2001)	39.37	11.63		
<b>Sexual Exploration-LCQ (total sample)</b>	30.22	12.80	3.21	-8.72***
Females	30.78	13.08	2.65	-6.30***
Females (Rader, 2001)	33.43	13.00		
<b>Attachment and Affiliation Motivation (total sample)</b>	170.40	20.55	2.27	-4.89***
Females	171.56	18.77	1.11	-2.15*
Females (Rader, 2001)	172.67	20.60		
<u>Indicators of Romantic Involvement</u>				
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement (total sample)</b>	8.09	2.29	0.73	4.88***
Females	8.27	2.10	0.91	5.42***
Females (Rader, 2001)	7.36	2.06		
<b>Sexual Involvement (total sample)</b>	7.98	3.02	2.41	13.93***
Females	8.26	2.81	2.69	13.82***
Females (Rader, 2001)	5.57	2.78		

(Table continues)

Table 4 (cont)

Means, Standard Deviations and t-Tests for the Female Participants and Total Sample in the Present Study in Comparison to the Female Participants from Prior Research (Rader, 2001) on Variables Representing Age, the Parent-Child Relationship, and Romantic Development

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*Note.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . The Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are taken from the Quality of Relationships Inventory. The Dating Exploration and Sexual Expression subscales, from the Life Choices Questionnaire, were examined as one subscale in the present study, but in this table were examined separately to maintain consistency for examination with prior research (Rader, 2001). The Attachment and Affiliation Motivation is taken from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale. Other items were designed for use in this study, based on prior research.

Table 5

## Correlation Matrix for Variables Among All Participants

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender		-.11	-.03	-.19**	.05	.03	-.01	-.17**	-.09	-.06	-.08	-.10
<u>Parent-Child Relationship Variables</u>												
2. Maternal Support		(.83)	-.52**	.67**	.28**	-.15**	.22**	.11	.12**	.16**	-.08	.05
3. Maternal Conflict			(.90)	-.31**	-.11	.24**	-.06	-.05	-.17**	-.06	.14*	.03
4. Maternal Depth				(.81)	.12*	-.04	.21**	.14*	.02	.20**	-.04	.04
5. Paternal Support					(.91)	-.37**	.83**	.04	.08	.14	.01	.06
6. Paternal Conflict						(.90)	-.35**	.08	-.11	.01	-.00	-.07
7. Paternal Depth							(.89)	.03	.06	.15*	.07	.02
<u>Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance</u>												
8. Dating and Sexual Exploration								(.94)	.16	.31**	.06	.22**
9. Dating Exploration									(.75)	.30**	.20**	.22**
10. Attachment/Affiliation Motivation										(.92)	.15*	.14*
<u>Indicators of Romantic Involvement</u>												
11. Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement											(.49)	.39**
12. Sexual Involvement												(.65)

*Note.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Coefficients alpha presented in ( ). In measuring gender, females were coded as 1 and males coded as 2. The Maternal and Paternal Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are from the Quality of Relationships Inventory. The Dating Exploration and Sexual Exploration subscales, combined to form the Dating and Sexual Exploration measure, are from the Life Choices Questionnaire. The additional Dating Exploration subscale is taken from the Exploration and Commitment Scale. The Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale.

Table 6

## Correlation Matrix for Variables Among Female Participants

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<u>Parent-Child Relationship Variables</u>											
1. Maternal Support	(.85)	-.58**	.70**	.27**	-.11	.19**	.16	.08	.12	-.14	.03
2. Maternal Conflict		(.90)	-.42**	-.04	.27**	-.01	.02	-.18*	.02	.10	.04
3. Maternal Depth			(.78)	.10	-.08	.21*	.10	-.06	.12	-.10	-.01
4. Paternal Support				(.92)	-.31**	.82**	.10	.08	.13	.08	-.00
5. Paternal Conflict					(.92)	-.33**	.19*	-.01	.07	-.00	-.01
6. Paternal Depth						(.90)	.02	.07	.16	.08	-.05
<u>Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance</u>											
7. Dating and Sexual Exploration							(.93)	.16	.37**	.03	.21*
8. Dating Exploration								(.73)	.24**	.25**	.12
9. Attachment/Affiliation Motivation									(.91)	.12	.15
<u>Indicators of Romantic Involvement</u>											
10. Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement										(.45)	.53**
11. Sexual Involvement											(.65)

*Note.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Coefficients alpha presented in ( ). The Maternal and Paternal Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are from the Quality of Relationships Inventory. The Dating Exploration and Sexual Exploration subscales, combined to form the Dating and Sexual Exploration measure, are from the Life Choices Questionnaire. The additional Dating Exploration subscale is taken from the Exploration and Commitment Scale. The Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale.

Table 7

## Correlation Matrix for Variables Among Male Participants

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<u>Parent-Child Relationship Variables</u>											
1. Maternal Support	(.80)	-.46**	.64**	.32**	-.20**	.25**	.03	.14	.18*	-.05	.05
2. Maternal Conflict		(.89)	-.22**	-.18*	.21*	-.11	-.13	-.16	-.13	.17*	.03
3. Maternal Depth			(.82)	.17*	-.00	.22*	.12	.06	.24**	-.03	.05
4. Paternal Support				(.90)	-.45**	.85**	.01	.10	.16	-.04	.15
5. Paternal Conflict					(.89)	-.36**	-.02	-.21*	-.04	.00	-.14
6. Paternal Depth						(.87)	.04	.06	.14	.06	.09
<u>Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance</u>											
7. Dating and Sexual Exploration							(.95)	.29**	.24**	.07	.21*
8. Dating Exploration								(.77)	.34**	.15	.14
9. Attachment/Affiliation Motivation									(.94)	.17*	.13
<u>Indicators of Romantic Involvement</u>											
10. Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement										(.53)	.26**
11. Sexual Involvement											(.66)

*Note.* \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . Coefficients alpha presented in ( ). The Maternal and Paternal Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are from the Quality of Relationships Inventory. The Dating Exploration and Sexual Exploration subscales are from the Life Choices Questionnaire. The additional Dating Exploration subscale is taken from the Exploration and Commitment Scale. The Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale.

Table 8

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Dating and Sexual Exploration (N = 277)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.166	.028	7.783	.006						
Gender								-.166	-.166	-2.790**
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.226	.051	2.921	.014	.024	1.686	.154			
Gender								-.166	-.170	-2.819**
Maternal Support								.109	.073	1.000
Maternal Conflict								-.048	-.037	-.513
Paternal Support								.044	.079	1.199
Paternal Conflict								.076	.129	1.972*
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.234	.055	2.597	.018	.003	.982	.323			
Gender								-.166	.160	.473
Maternal Support								.109	.249	1.297
Maternal Conflict								-.048	-.032	-.447
Paternal Support								.044	.079	1.193
Paternal Conflict								.076	.124	1.894
Gender * Maternal Support								-.109	-.363	-.991

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."



Table 9

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Dating and Sexual Exploration (N = 277)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.166	.028	7.783	.006						
Gender								-.166	-.166	-2.790**
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.226	.051	2.921	.014	.024	1.686	.154			
Gender								-.166	-.170	-2.819**
Maternal Support								.109	.073	1.000
Maternal Conflict								-.048	-.037	-.513
Paternal Support								.044	.079	1.199
Paternal Conflict								.076	.129	1.972*
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.228	.052	2.475	.024	.001	.287	.593			
Gender								-.166	-.062	-.294
Maternal Support								.109	.073	1.004
Maternal Conflict								-.048	-.038	-.529
Paternal Support								.044	.171	.930
Paternal Conflict								.076	.126	1.914
Gender * Paternal Support								-.099	-.151	-.536

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 10

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Attachment/Affiliation Motivation (N = 286)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.046	.002	.611	.435						
Gender								-.046	-.782	-1.285
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.206	.042	2.475	.032	.040	2.937	.021			
Gender								-.046	-.045	-.753
Maternal Support								.154	.109	1.534
Maternal Conflict								-.067	-.021	-.296
Paternal Support								.142	.146	2.198*
Paternal Conflict								.014	.090	1.383
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.207	.043	2.077	.056	.000	.127	.721			
Gender								-.046	-.166	-.481
Maternal Support								.154	.044	.229
Maternal Conflict								-.067	-.022	-.319
Paternal Support								.142	.147	2.202*
Paternal Conflict								.014	.092	1.404
Gender * Maternal Support								.034	.132	.357

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 11

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Attachment/Affiliation Motivation (N = 286)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.046	.002	.611	.435						
Gender								-.046	-.782	-1.285
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.206	.042	2.475	.032	.040	2.937	.021			
Gender								-.046	-.045	-.753
Maternal Support								.154	.109	1.534
Maternal Conflict								-.067	-.021	-.296
Paternal Support								.142	.146	2.198*
Paternal Conflict								.014	.090	1.383
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.207	.043	2.091	.054	.001	.205	.651			
Gender								-.046	-.136	-.647
Maternal Support								.154	.109	1.531
Maternal Conflict								-.067	-.019	-.269
Paternal Support								.142	.069	.374
Paternal Conflict								.014	.091	1.399
Gender * Paternal Support								.060	.126	.453

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 12

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement (N = 292)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.093	.009	2.512	.114						
Gender								-.093	-.093	-1.585
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.181	.033	1.935	.089	.024	1.784	.132			
Gender								-.093	-.094	-1.582
Maternal Support								-.084	-.038	-.532
Maternal Conflict								.149	.136	1.948
Paternal Support								.013	.035	.528
Paternal Conflict								-.001	-.024	-.376
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.185	.034	1.689	.123	.002	.477	.490			
Gender								-.093	-.321	-.961
Maternal Support								-.084	-.159	-.840
Maternal Conflict								.149	.134	1.900
Paternal Support								.013	.035	.529
Paternal Conflict								-.001	-.022	-.343
Gender * Maternal Support								-.118	.248	.691

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 13

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement (N = 292)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.093	.009	2.512	.114						
Gender								-.093	-.093	-1.585
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.181	.033	1.935	.089	.024	1.784	.132			
Gender								-.093	-.094	-1.582
Maternal Support								-.084	-.038	-.532
Maternal Conflict								.149	.136	1.948
Paternal Support								.013	.035	.528
Paternal Conflict								-.001	-.024	-.376
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.188	.035	1.735	.123	.003	.743	.389			
Gender								-.093	.078	.376
Maternal Support								-.084	-.037	-.523
Maternal Conflict								.149	.134	1.905
Paternal Support								.013	.179	.995
Paternal Conflict								-.001	-.028	-.434
Gender * Paternal Support								-.072	-.238	-.862

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 14

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Sexual Involvement (N = 274)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.124	.015	4.237	.041						
Gender								-.124	-.124	-2.058*
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.172	.030	1.643	.149	.014	.995	.411			
Gender								-.124	-.116	-1.881
Maternal Support								.054	.065	.880
Maternal Conflict								.043	.097	1.354
Paternal Support								.061	.035	.514
Paternal Conflict								-.074	-.075	-1.127
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.173	.030	1.369	.227	.000	.030	.863			
Gender								-.124	-.175	-.505
Maternal Support								.054	.033	.168
Maternal Conflict								.043	.096	1.336
Paternal Support								.061	.035	.513
Paternal Conflict								-.074	-.075	-1.115
Gender * Maternal Support								-.084	.064	.173

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 15

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Sexual Involvement (N = 274)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<i>t</i>
<u>Block 1 Participants' Gender</u>										
	.124	.015	4.237	.041						
Gender								-.124	-.124	-2.058*
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
	.172	.030	1.643	.149	.014	.995	.411			
Gender								-.124	-.116	-1.881
Maternal Support								.054	.065	.880
Maternal Conflict								.043	.097	1.354
Paternal Support								.061	.035	.514
Paternal Conflict								-.074	-.075	-1.127
<u>Block 3 Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)</u>										
	.192	.037	1.710	.227	.007	2.014	.157			
Gender								-.124	-.408	-1.898
Maternal Support								.054	.063	.851
Maternal Conflict								.043	.102	1.424
Paternal Support								.061	-.210	-1.133
Paternal Conflict								-.074	-.070	-1.055
Gender * Paternal Support								-.034	.406	1.419

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by "r."

Table 16

Factor Loadings of Family Relationship and Romantic Development Variables in Rader and Campbell's (2001) Study (N = 121) and the Present Study (N = 150 Females and 141 Males)

Variable	Rader and Campbell's Study				Rader's Present Study			
	Supportive Father	Destructive Parental	Supportive Mother	Constructive Parental	Supportive Mother	Supportive Father	Supportive Father	Supportive Mother
Family Relationship Variables								
1. Support	.591	<b>-.660</b>	.401	<b>.732</b>				
2. Father Constructive	.539	-.366	.161	<b>.883</b>				
3. Father Destructive	<b>-.626</b>	<b>.770</b>	.000	-.361				
4. Father Avoidant	-.451	<b>.711</b>	.009	-.176				
5. Mother Constructive	.272	-.322	.369	<b>.943</b>				
6. Mother Destructive	-.113	<b>.813</b>	-.387	-.454				
7. Mother Avoidant	-.005	<b>.786</b>	-.248	-.254				
8. Mother Support	.008	-.173	<b>.911</b>	.307	<b>.895</b>	.259	.319	<b>.905</b>
9. Mother Conflict	.005	.406	<b>-.759</b>	-.381	<b>-.800</b>	-.081	-.211	<b>-.639</b>
10. Mother Depth	.006	-.106	<b>.903</b>	.310	<b>.854</b>	.176	.144	<b>.816</b>
11. Father Support	<b>.895</b>	-.247	.006	.367	.139	<b>.926</b>	<b>.934</b>	.295
12. Father Conflict	<b>-.727</b>	.577	.004	-.258	-.213	-.547	<b>-.669</b>	-.157
13. Father Depth	<b>.890</b>	-.205	.110	.439	.145	<b>.931</b>	<b>.902</b>	.258

(Table continues)



Table 16 (cont.)

Factor Loadings of Family Relationship and Romantic Development Variables in Rader and Campbell's (2001) Study (N = 121) and the Present Study (N = 150 Females and 141 Males)

Variable	Rader and Campbell's Study				Rader's Present Study	
	Female Participants		Male Participants			
	Importance of Attachment Relationships	Romantic and Sexual Involvement	Attachment Relationship Importance	Romantic Involvement	Attachment Relationship Importance	Romantic Involvement
Romantic Development Variables						
1. Romantic Involvement	.176	<b>.649</b>	.152	<b>.884</b>	.034	<b>.807</b>
2. Sexual Involvement	.280	<b>.818</b>	.283	<b>.859</b>	.233	<b>.666</b>
3. Dating Exploration	<b>.782</b>	.467	<b>.846</b>	.233	<b>.921</b>	.244
4. Sexual Exploration	.269	<b>.723</b>	<b>.717</b>	.015	<b>.849</b>	.133
5. Marriage Exploration	<b>.844</b>	.131	<b>.881</b>	.343	<b>.931</b>	.324
6. Attachment Motivation	<b>.675</b>	.249	<b>.607</b>	.193	.370	.547

*Note.* Principal-components factor analysis was performed with promax (oblique) rotation. Weights above .60 are boldface. The first four columns of factor loadings in the Family Relationship Variables are from Rader and Campbell's (2001) study with female participants. The additional four columns are derived from the present study, first regarding female participants and then the male participants. The first two columns of factor loadings in the Romantic Development Variables are from Rader and Campbell's (2001) study. The following two columns are derived from the present study, first in regard to female participants and then male participants. The Support scale is taken from the Supportive Parental Relationship Scale. The Constructive, Destructive, and Avoidant subscales for Mother and Father are taken from the Interparental Conflict Tactics Scale. The Maternal and Paternal Support, Conflict, and Depth subscales are from the Quality of Relationships Inventory. The Dating Exploration, Sexual Exploration, and Marriage Exploration subscales are from the Life Choices Questionnaire. The Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale.

Table 17

## Summary of Follow-up Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Both Genders Predicting Attachment Relationship Importance

(N = 150 Females and 141 Males)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
<u>Regression with Female Participants</u>										
<u>Block 1 Age</u>										
Age	.100	.010	1.249	.266				.100	.100	1.117
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
Age	.132	.018	.726	.538	.008	.470	.626	.100	.093	1.021
Supportive Mother								-.095	-.088	-.966
Supportive Father								-.003	.020	.223
<u>Regression with Male Participants</u>										
<u>Block 1 Age</u>										
Age	.149	.022	2.805	.097				.149	.149	1.675
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
Age	.177	.031	1.321	.271	.009	.588	.557	.149	.142	1.584
Supportive Mother								.101	.077	.819
Supportive Father								.066	.040	.428

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by “*r*.”

Table 18

## Summary of Follow-up Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Both Genders Predicting Romantic Involvement

(N = 150 Females and 141 Males)

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i> for Model	Sig. <i>F</i>	Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Change in <i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i> Change	<i>r</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
<u>Regression with Female Participants</u>										
<u>Block 1 Age</u>										
Age	.283	.080	10.776	.001						
								-.283	-.283	-3.283***
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
Age	.308	.095	4.252	.007	.015	.991	.374			
Supportive Mother								-.283	-.265	-3.044**
Supportive Father								.127	.087	.997
								.117	.074	.843
<u>Regression with Male Participants</u>										
<u>Block 1 Age</u>										
Age	.035	.001	.151	.699						
								.035	.035	.388
<u>Block 2 Parent-Child Relationship</u>										
Age	.125	.016	.642	.590	.014	.888	.414			
Supportive Mother								.035	.033	.362
Supportive Father								.036	-.004	-.040
								.120	.121	1.281

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$ . \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ . Zero order correlations are represented by “*r*.”

## Figure Caption

*Figure 1.* Hierarchical multiple regression design used in principal analyses. Independent variables were entered in three blocks and separate regressions were conducted with each interaction term for each of the four dependent variables. The Maternal and Paternal Support and Conflict subscales are from the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI). The Dating and Sexual Exploration subscale is from the Life Choices Questionnaire (LCQ © Harold D. Grotevant, 2003). The Attachment/Affiliation Motivation is from the Attachment/Affiliation Descriptors Scale (AAD). Other items were designed for use in this study, based on prior research (RIBS and SIS).

## Independent Variables

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Block 1: Gender

Block 2: Parent-Child Relationship

Maternal Support

Maternal Conflict

Paternal Support

Paternal Conflict

Block 3: Interaction of Gender and Parent-Child Relationship (Support)

Gender \* Maternal Support

Gender \* Paternal Support

## Dependent Variables

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Indicators of Attachment Relationship Importance

1. Attachment/Affiliation Motivation
2. Dating and Sexual Exploration

Indicators of Romantic Involvement

3. Behavioral Indicators of Romantic Involvement Scale
4. Sexual Involvement Scale

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