



Greek adolescents' intimate relations before their transition to adulthood



Dimitris Pnevmatikos ^{a,*}, Achilles N. Bardos ^b

^a University of Western Macedonia, Greece

^b University of Northern Colorado, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 22 August 2014

Keywords:

Adolescence
Emerging Adulthood
Intimacy
Parents
Peers

ABSTRACT

The study examined whether the characteristics of the other partner in a dyad could reveal some unique intimate relationships regardless of the commonalities in the intimate relationships adolescents and emerging adults endorse with four important partners (mother, father, female and male peers). Six hundred and thirteen (56.8% female) Greek adolescents and emerging adults participated in the study. Participants endorsed their agreement to nine items addressing issues of intimacy and companionship. The intimate relationships with the four important partners share some common characteristics reflecting the person who endorses the intimate relationships and are also reciprocal, depending on who is the other partner in the dyad. The intimacy participants endorsed with their parents contributed to the intimate relationship with their peers of the same sex with the parent. The way Greek youth is gendered could explain the characteristics of the intimate relationships they endorse with the other partners in the dyads.

© 2014 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The capacity to form intimate relationships is among the most salient psychosocial processes (Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004) of the adolescent and emerging adult years, defined as age 18–25 (Arnett, 2000). During this period we observe the development of intense friendships or romantic relationships with peers of the same or opposite sex, including increased sexual interests (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002). Most of the developmental research has been focused on companionship and intimate relations with parents and peers until adolescence (e.g. Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2000; Sharabany, 1994) and indicates that the better the relationship that adolescents have with their parents, the better their relationship with their peers will be.

This developmental research has at least three characteristics. First, companionship and intimate relationships are considered a stable characteristic of the adolescent, mainly constructed in early years of development through the attachment to parents, and they influence all future relationships. Intimate relationships are a result of an interaction between two individuals in a specific context. Intimate relationships with peers are sensitive to the attachment type (e.g. Weimer, Kerns, & Oldenburg, 2004), the gender of the other in the dyad (Dindia & Allen, 1992), and have strong cultural influences (Greenfield,

* Corresponding author. University of Western Macedonia, School of Education, 3rd Km of National Road Florina – Niki, GR-53100, Florina, Greece. Tel.: +30 2385055035; fax: +30 2385055003.

E-mail addresses: dpnevmat@uowm.gr, dpnevma@gmail.com (D. Pnevmatikos).

Keller, Fuglini, & Maynard, 2003). Thus, while studying intimate relationships, it is appropriate to specify who the other in the dyad is. Second, the transition from adolescence to young adulthood is a period of significant nonlinear transformation in family relationships (Tsai, Telzer, & Fuligni, 2013). A linear decline in intimacy with the parents is set off with an increased intimacy with peers, but the relationships with the mother and the father do not follow similar developmental trajectories, and possibly impact with unknown dynamics on their intimate relationships with peers. Culture is the third characteristic that influences intimate relationships, with dependency on family and kinship reported to be stronger in the Southern than in the Northern European countries (Billari, Rosina, Ranaldi, & Romano, 2008; Fuligni & Masten, 2010; Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007; Mendonca & Fonaine, 2013; Moreno, 2012). Among the Southern countries, Greece is considered to be a typical example of kinship forms and practices (Papataxiarchis, 2012) where relationships with emotional mothers are far more intimate than relationships with distant and unreachable fathers (Paxson, 2004).

In this study we investigated the dynamics in relationships of companionship/intimacy with four dyads (i.e. mother, father, female and male peers) during adolescence and emerging adulthood in the Greek context.

The development of the intimate relationships during adolescence and emerging adulthood

While some aspects of intimacy such as the need for companionship emerge as early as toddlerhood (Sullivan, 1953) and develop further in pre-adolescence, adult-like forms of intimacy (e.g. disclosing one's inner most feelings) do not appear before children approach adolescence (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Parents are the first who fulfill children's need for companionship and intimacy, with adolescents reporting closer relationships (Tsai et al., 2013) and more reciprocity (Collins & Russell, 1991) with their mothers than with their fathers.

Despite the relative stability of the quality of parent–child relationships during adolescence (Shanahan, McHale, Crouter, & Osgood, 2007), as adolescents become independent of their families, individuation from family leads to a decline in parent–child cohesion and relationships (e.g. Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 1988). The warmth adolescents feel for their parents is significantly diminished (Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000; McGue, Elkins, Walden, & Iacono, 2005) and by the end of their secondary education, romantic partners are their most important intimate partners, followed by their best friends, mothers and finally fathers (Buhrmester, 1996).

Companionship and intimacy are among the most important functions of friendships in early adolescence. Adolescents spend more time with their peers than with their family members, thus peers gradually become the agents to whom adolescents turn for companionship and enjoyment (Shulman & Kipnis, 2001). Although adolescents spend less time with parents and more with peers, intimacy is not replaced; parents still fulfill the adolescents' and young adults' need for proximity, companionship and intimacy (Freeman & Brown, 2001). Further, the relationship experiences adolescents endorse with their parents have an impact on their peers' interactions (Black, 2002; Glick, Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2013).

The transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood is a critical period in which important transformations in youth's perceptions of their family relationships occur. Emerging adulthood provides greater opportunities to exercise independence, and the pursuit of individualistic goals becomes central (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults spend more time with friends and romantic partners than with their family (Fuligni & Masten, 2010). Balancing individual autonomy and connectedness with families is a task that must be learned by both adolescents and emerging adults. Recent evidence suggests that, throughout adolescence and young adulthood, across different dimensions of family relationship trajectories, discontinuity is more common than continuity. In the eight-year longitudinal study, emerging adults were focused on maintaining and strengthening their family relationships (values linked to respect and future support), and thus, compared with the adolescence years, some aspects of their family relationships did not necessarily worsen (Tsai et al., 2013). For instance, feelings of emotional closeness in dyadic relationships with mothers did not significantly change between the adolescence and young adulthood. However, the decline in feelings of closeness with the father and in perceived father cohesion noted during adolescence persisted into young adulthood. Therefore, the transition from adolescence to young adulthood appears to be a critical period in which the dynamics of relationships within the family change, and this change could disturb the dynamics of the relationships of individuals with their family members and peers.

The dynamics of the intimate relationships with parents and peers

On the basis of Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory, scholars hypothesized that the type of emotional connection infants and toddlers make with primary attachment figures, such as parents, is used as an internal working model of self and as a secure base to explore peer relationships in adolescent or early adult romantic relationships. However, the correlation between attachment to parents and to peers found among adolescents and young adults was low to medium (e.g. Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), depending on the aspect that had been measured. It was suggested that this finding leaves space for considering their relationships with others as *unique* (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Weimer et al. (2004) suggested that it is not the type of attachment that adolescents form in infancy *per se* that affects their intimate relations with peers, but the combination of the attachment type and the dyads involved in the interaction; dyads with two secure members promoted better relationships than dyads with one insecure partner. Furthermore, in cross-sex relationships, males are more emotionally expressive (Monsour, 1992) and more intimate (Dindia & Allen, 1992). The idea that the relational self might vary as a function with significant others is in accordance to the interpersonal social-cognitive theory which assumes that each linkage with the significant others captures relatively *unique* aspects of the self (Andersen & Chen, 2002).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/880780>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/880780>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)