Abstract

EVANS, RAVEN LASHAUN. The Quality of Romantic Relationships in Late Adolescence: Associations with Parental Conflict and Adolescent Attachment Security. (Under the direction of Dr. Mary Haskett.)

Romantic relationships play a key role in the lives of adolescents. Dating experiences and quality of romantic relationships have been found to be strong predictors of academic, social, and emotional adjustment of adolescents; therefore, it is important to understand factors that contribute to the quality of these relationships. Extant research, albeit limited in quantity and scope, indicates that witnessing interparental conflict can have a negative impact on adolescents’ relationships with peers and romantic partners. Although research on mechanisms that explain the link between interparental conflict and adolescent’s relationship quality is limited, there is some evidence that adolescents’ attachment to parents might mediate that link. Thus, it was hypothesized that quality of late adolescents’ romantic relationships would be predicted by the level of conflict witnessed between their parents and that adolescents’ attachment to their mothers would mediate that relation. In addition, the role of adolescent gender as a moderator of the association between attachment and quality of romantic relationships was explored. A total of 210 college students (ages 18-19) completed self-report questionnaires regarding conflict strategies witnessed in the home during the previous three years, maternal attachment, and perceptions of social support and negative interchanges in their most recent romantic relationship. Analyses to test the hypothesized mediation model were conducted using regression procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) and the bootstrapping approach suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Results indicated that witnessed
Interparental conflict did not predict quality of romantic relationships in late adolescence and maternal attachment was not found to play a significant mediating role. Further, gender did not moderate the link between attachment and quality of romantic relationships. Results are discussed in terms of potential explanations for the failure to find support for hypotheses and directions for future research are provided.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my best friend, my husband, Michael. Thank you for your tireless support and encouragement. We did this together. FLEL.
Biography

Raven L. Evans was born June 26, 1977 in Ft. Hood, TX. She attended and graduated Sum Cum Laude from North Carolina State University with a Bachelors of Art degree in Psychology in May 1999. The following fall Raven returned to North Carolina State University to pursue graduate studies in School Psychology. She graduated with a Master of Science in Psychology in 2003. Raven currently resides in North Carolina with her husband, Michael, their two beautiful daughters, Illyana and Isabella, and their two dogs.
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Introduction

Romantic relationships play a significant role in the lives of adolescents and affect multiple aspects of adolescent development including academic achievement, psychological well-being, identity development, and peer and family relationships. Although forming romantic relationships is considered a normal, typically healthy developmental task, these relationships also can serve as the biggest source of stress for adolescents (Larson, Clore, & Wood, 1999). To illustrate, involvement in romantic relationships has been found to be positively associated with reports of symptoms of depression. Joyner and Udry (2000) found that adolescents involved in romantic relationships showed significantly more depressive symptoms than adolescents not involved in romantic relationships. Rejection and unreciprocated love also have been found to be sources of stress and depression for adolescents, with adolescents who experience rejection reporting low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, and negative self-image (Welsh, Grello, & Harper, 2003).

Another important impact romantic relationships can have in the lives of adolescents relates to identity development. It is through romantic relationships that adolescents develop self-schemas specifically related to themselves as a romantic partner. Research indicates that these self-schemas are related to the presence of romantic relationships in general and to the quality of those relationships (Connolly & Konarski, 1994). Specifically, adolescents who have positive self-schema regarding romantic relationships may view themselves as more suitable and worthy partners than those who have more negative self-schema (Furman & Shaffer, 2003).

Characteristics of family relationships, especially family conflict, are also related to
aspects of adolescent romantic relationships (Laursen, 1995). Parents and adolescents often have different views and expectations surrounding dating issues (e.g., curfew) and finding common ground can be challenging (Furman & Shaffer, 2003). Adolescents involved in romantic relationships tend to spend less time with family than adolescents who are not involved in romantic relationships (Laursen & Williams, 1997). Furthermore, romantic relationships become an increasingly important source of support for adolescents. By the tenth grade, romantic partners have been found to be as important as mothers as a source of support (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

Overall, adolescent romantic relationships can influence and are influenced by multiple factors in the lives of adolescents and reach across multiple contexts. These relationships play an integral role in adolescent development and occupy a large proportion of adolescents’ thoughts and emotional energy. Successful navigation of these relationships can be challenging and adolescents often struggle with trying to gain competence in this domain (Welsh, Grello, & Harper, 2003). Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of predictors of competence in adolescent romantic relationships. Of particular interest to the current study are adolescents’ experiences in their family of origin as precursors to the quality of later romantic relationships.

Early family interactions have been hypothesized to play a role in the development of competence in romantic relationships, and research supports this hypothesis (Collins & Van Dulmen, 2006; Steinberg, Davila, & Fincham, 2006). For example, positive relationships with parents in childhood predict high adult relationship satisfaction (Belt & Abidin, 1996). By contrast, parents’ negative emotionality during interactions with adolescents is related to
poor quality of late adolescent romantic relationships (Kim, Conger, Lorenz, & Elder, 2001). Collins and Sroufe (1999) have argued that children’s early experiences in close relationships serve as the foundation for the development of relationship competence. Their findings indicate that parent-child relationships in infancy and early childhood predict the quality of adolescent and adult romantic relationships. The importance of parent-child relationships continues into adolescence. For example, Conger, Cui, Bryant, and Elder (2000) found that positive family interactions of early adolescents predicted warm and supportive romantic interactions in late adolescence. Just as positive family interactions have been found to be related to positive outcomes for adolescents, negative family interactions have been found to have the opposite effect. In addition to research pointing to the importance of parent-child relationships in prediction of later functioning, another set of findings highlights the relevance of inter-parental relations in children’s later relationship functioning. Specifically, past research has documented a link between marital conflict and internalizing and externalizing difficulties in children (Grych & Fincham, 2001).

Although past research indicates links between family interactions and adolescents’ romantic relationships, this research has been limited in quantity and scope. For example, of particular interest to the current study are the relations among interparental conflict, adolescents’ attachment to their parents, and the quality of adolescents’ romantic relationships. Interparental conflict has been linked to a variety of childhood outcomes but limited attention has been paid to the effects of interparental conflict on adolescent development in general and more specifically the impact of such conflict on the romantic relationships of adolescents. In addition, Cummings and Davies (2002) have argued that
there is a need for research to turn toward process-oriented research to examine the
association between marital conflict and child development within a larger, more complex
system in which multiple factors, influences, and pathways may be at work.

Examples of possible themes of process-oriented research as identified by Cummings
and Davies (2002) include (a) investigating children’s cognitive, emotional, and social
responses as mediators or moderators of the association between marital conflict and child
development; and (b) examining various family factors and child characteristics as possible
mediators or moderators of the association between marital conflict and child development.
Cox and Paley (2003) also address the issue of conducting process-oriented research and the
importance of understanding families as systems. Consistent with Cummings and Davies
(2002), these authors report that there is a lack of process-oriented research, particularly
research examining families as systems and the interplay between multiple levels of family
interactions (e.g., marital, parent-child). Although advances have been made over the last
decade with regard to examining the relation between marital conflict and child development
from a process-oriented approach, more work is needed. To this end, the current study was
designed to examine the relation between interparental conflict and the quality of
adolescents’ romantic relationships via parent-child attachment. Gender as a possible
moderator of the association between parental attachment and adolescents’ romantic
relationship quality was also explored.

The foundation for the current study is based on attachment theory. According to
Bowlby’s (1969) attachment framework, individuals develop internal representations of
relationships based on their experiences with their early caregivers. These internal
representations, or working models, then serve as templates for adolescents’ later relationships, including romantic relationships (Welsh, Grello, & Harper, 2003). In other words, according to this perspective, adolescents’ experiences in their relationships with their parents inform how they think, feel, and behave in other relationships. These experiences include direct interactions with their parents and their observations of their mothers’ and fathers’ interactions with each other. Gaining a better understanding of the possible associations among interparental factors, parent-child interaction factors, and adolescents’ romantic relationship factors could help inform interventions for adolescents experiencing difficulties developing romantic relational competence and could potentially contribute to the development of programs to prevent relationship violence (Wolfe, Gough, Reitzel-Jaffe, Grasley, Pittman, Lefebvre, Stumpf, 1996).

Although romantic relationships between adolescents have historically been viewed as unimportant and transitory, a recent upsurge in scientific research on adolescent romantic relationships indicates increased interest in the examination of these relationships (Collins, 2003). The current study will join this growing body of research in the examination of adolescent romantic relationships by investigating the relations between family characteristics during early adolescent years and subsequent romantic relationship functioning in later adolescence. More specifically, the possible mediation effects of attachment to mothers on the relation between witnessed interparental conflict and current romantic relationship quality will be explored. The model to be tested is depicted in Figure 1 below.
Adolescents’ romantic relationships can significantly impact their lives across multiple domains of functioning. Understanding factors that influence these relationships can aid in fostering healthy development. In this section, an overview of the extant research on associations among adolescent attachment, interparental conflict, and adolescents’ romantic relationships will be discussed in detail. This discussion will begin with a brief overview of attachment theory, followed by a discussion of the importance of attachment to adolescents.

**Overview of Attachment Theory**

John Bowlby (1979) stated that attachment was a key component of human behavior from “the cradle to the grave.” Although that claim lacked empirical evidence at the time, researchers have since explored this claim, and findings suggest that attachment bonds are present and prominent throughout the lifespan (Rosenstein & Harowitz, 1996).
Since the 1940s researchers have been conducting studies to examine mother-child bonds. However, it was the pioneering work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth that sparked a firestorm of research examining attachment behaviors between children and their caregivers (Marvin & Britner, 1999). Some of the major contributions of Bowlby will be discussed first, followed by an examination of the contributions of Ainsworth; the work of both has proved invaluable to the study of attachment.

Drawing from evolutionary biology, ethology, developmental psychology, cognitive science, and control systems theory, Bowlby introduced a theory of attachment focusing on the biological foundation of attachment behavior. Bowlby theorized that, during human evolution, genetics favored attachment behaviors because these behaviors led to the predictable outcome of increasing proximity of the child to the attachment figure and ultimately to the child’s survival. More specifically, Bowlby posited that a child’s ability to maintain proximity to his/her attachment figure afforded him/her protection from predators and survival of the gene pool. Bowlby thought children would be particularly likely to seek their attachment figure when distressed (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Bowlby subsequently discussed the role of attachment as a behavioral system that interacted with other major behavioral systems, including the exploratory system and the fear system.

Bowlby identified three behavioral systems as key to the understanding of attachment: the attachment system, the exploratory system, and the fear system. The attachment behavioral system consists of attachment behaviors (e.g., crying, grasping, following) that have similar functions. The behaviors chosen at any given time depend on the context and what the child perceives will be most useful in achieving proximity based on
internal working models of their selves, others, and the environment (Cassidy, 1999). Once the child’s goals are attained, the attachment behavior is decreased, but not terminated. The exploratory system consists of behaviors that facilitate the child examining and learning about his/her environment and contributes to survival in that it provides information about how the world works. The fear system shares the same biological function as the attachment system - protection from danger and survival. The fear system is composed of behaviors indicating fear of danger or harm (e.g., darkness and aloneness). Unlike the exploratory system, when the fear system is activated, the attachment system is also activated as the child seeks protection from their caregiver.

As a member of Bowlby’s research team, Ainsworth was present during the initial conceptualization of attachment theory. However, it was her later naturalistic observational studies of mothers and their infants that solidified her contribution to attachment theory and provided a framework for investigating attachment theory that continues to be utilized today. Though her contributions to the development and study of attachment theory are numerous, Ainsworth, along with colleagues, is probably most well known for the development of the “strange situation,” a method of measuring the quality of young children’s attachment. The “strange situation” consists of eight 3-minute episodes designed to alter the activation of the attachment, exploratory, and fear systems in infants by placing them in situations of increasing stress. Based on observations of these episodes, three principal styles of attachment were identified, secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent with the later two being considered insecure styles of attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A fourth classification group, Disorganized/disoriented was later identified by Main and
Solomon (1990) to describe the approximately 15% of children who were difficult to classify in the aforementioned groups.

Both Bowlby and Ainsworth established a foundation from which attachment theory and research expanded. Although much of the early research examining attachment focused on the parent-infant/toddler relationship, researchers have since expanded their examinations to include older children, adolescents, and adults. Research has demonstrated the continuing importance of the parent-child bond beyond infancy and its effects across the lifespan (Marvin & Britner, 1999). Of particular relevance to the current study is attachment in adolescence, particularly late adolescence. This topic will be examined in more detail in the next section.

Prior to discussing the importance of attachment in adolescence it should be noted that as a result of the growing conceptualization of attachment across the life-span, researchers have found it necessary to develop new techniques for assessing attachment. The “strange situation” continues to be utilized with younger populations but examinations of attachment in older children, adolescents, and adults often rely on structured interviews and self-report measures. These alternative measurement strategies have been found to be both reliable and valid measures of attachment to parents in older children, adolescents and adults (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999).

The Importance of Attachment in Adolescence

Adolescents and their parents spend less time together and interact differently than do parents and younger children. The bond between parent and adolescent remains strong. However, the nature of the relationship changes to accommodate the developmental needs of
the adolescent (Collins & Laursen, 2000). For example, as discussed previously, there tends to be an increase in conflict between parents and children during adolescence as teens develop a sense of autonomy and identity. Nonetheless, adolescents continue to seek out their parents for information and are likely to turn to their parents first for emotional support when confronted with significant stressors. In essence they continue to use their parents as a secure base and view them as strong attachment figures (Allen & Land, 1999).

The relation between adolescents’ search for autonomy and their attachment to their parents can be explained similarly to the relation previously discussed between infants and their parents. When adolescents’ exploratory systems are highly activated their attachment systems are less activated. However, adolescents still rely on the knowledge that their parents will be there if needed. This link between the exploratory and the attachment systems of adolescents is evidenced by research indicating that autonomy-seeking behavior is positively related to positive relationships with parents (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O’Connor, 1994).

Attachment has also been proposed as playing a particularly significant role in the lives of late adolescent college students. According to Kenny (1987, 1995), going away to college can be conceptualized as a “naturally occurring Strange Situation.” College students are faced with a new set of experiences that they have to learn to navigate. Based on attachment theory, under these circumstances readily available support from their parents (e.g., phone calls to discuss concerns) would foster healthy exploration of this new environment and subsequent adjustment.

Some investigations have affirmed the importance of attachment to parents in adolescence and the effects it can have on adolescent psychosocial functioning. Allen,
Moore, Kuperminc, and Bell (1998), for example, found that adolescents classified as securely attached, based on interview probes of descriptions of childhood relationships with parents and changes in those relationships, were more likely than adolescents classified as insecurely attached to be socially accepted by peers and less likely to experience internalizing symptoms or engage in externalizing delinquent behaviors. More recently, Allen, et al. (2007) found attachment security to be negatively related to depressive symptoms. Findings from this study also indicated that insecurity was significantly related to a pattern of increasing externalizing behavior across three years during adolescence. Similarly, Engles, Finkenauer, Meeus, and Dekovic (2001) found that quality of attachment to parents, as measured by the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), was a significant predictor of adolescent’s emotional adjustment and that for adolescents aged 15-18, quality of attachment to parents was associated with social skills which subsequently affected adolescents’ friendship competence and romantic relationships.

In summary, though peer relationships play an increasingly important role in the lives of adolescents, these relationships do not overshadow the importance of the parent-child relationship. Adolescents continue to seek both emotional and physical support from their parents. Research indicates the quality of attachment present during this developmental period is linked to a variety of outcomes, including relational competence. This link will be discussed next.

Attachment and Adolescents’ Romantic Relationships

Attachment to parents has been theorized to continue to impact children’s adjustment across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1982). Based on this view, the parent-child relationship is
thought to serve as a template for expectations and behaviors in later relationships (Goldberg, 2000). There has been some research to support this view, particularly in adult populations. To illustrate, Hazan and Shaver (1987) found retrospective accounts of secure attachment in adulthood to be concurrently related to higher relationship quality of adults. Participants who reported having been securely attached described their love experiences as being friendly, happy and trusting. Those categorized as avoidant reported fear of closeness and those categorized as anxious/ambivalent characterized their love experiences as being wrought with jealousy and emotional extremes. Subsequent studies replicated these findings (e.g., Feeney & Noller, 1990). Compared to the adult relationships of individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment, adults with secure attachment report higher levels of commitment, trust, satisfaction, and relationship interdependence (Simpson, 1990), more relationship stability (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994), and higher levels of intimacy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Although a link between attachment and adult romantic relationships has been documented, less is known about the association between attachment and the romantic relationships of adolescents (Steinberg, Davila, & Fincham, 2006). This is unfortunate given the importance of these relationships to the development of adolescents (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2006). Of the studies that have examined this link in adolescence, results have varied depending on the stage of adolescence assessed and the adolescent’s gender.

Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, and Dekovic (2001) researched the association between parental attachment and adolescents’ emotional adjustment for participants in early and
middle adolescence and the possible mediating role of social skills and relational competence. Findings suggested that neither parental attachment and social skills nor parental attachment and perceived relational competence were related in early adolescence (ages 12 to 14). However, in middle adolescence (ages 15 to 18), parental attachment and social skills were found to be related, which in turn related to adolescents’ perceived relationship competence. This link was found for relationships with peers as well as relationships with romantic partners. The authors hypothesized that a possible reason for the lack of association between parental attachment and social skills and relational competence in early adolescence may be that during this developmental period adolescents are experiencing many significant biological and academic changes that may have a greater impact on how early adolescents view themselves and may result in greater preoccupation with these changes as compared to issues involving social skills and relational competence. Lastly, parental attachment and relational competence did predict emotional adjustment for both age groups.

Roisman, Madsen, Hennighausen, Sroufe, and Collins (2001) found participants’ parental attachment security status during late adolescence (age 19) was related to a positive relational process in romantic relationships at age 20. However, security status was not related to ratings of negative affective tone during romantic interactions. Miller and Hoicowitz (2004) also found a correlation between parental attachment and relationship quality in first and second year college students. Participants’ attachment to parents, particularly mothers, predicted a significant amount of variation in memories of high school romantic relationship quality. Additionally, in their examination of attachment and
relationship quality in dating couples, Collins and Read (1990) found that for their undergraduate participants, (mean age 18.8) attachment was significantly related to a variety of relationship outcome variables. Specifically, participants’ reports of anxiety or feelings of abandonment and rejection, as related to attachment insecurity, were positively related to negative views of their romantic relationships and positively related to reported relationship satisfaction and communication.

Of particular interest to the current investigation, gender differences have been found with regard to the link between adolescent attachment to parents and romantic relationships. Vivona (2000) found that for late adolescent females, but not males, insecure attachment was significantly related to difficulties with college adjustment and lower intimacy development or openness and comfort in interpersonal relationships. Differences in gender identity socialization between males and females are possible reason for these findings. The salient development goals of males at this age may be establishing autonomy, and as a result adolescent males might focus less on attachment needs and more on being independent. Similar results were reported by Creasey (2002), who found female undergraduate participants (age 18-25), but not males, with secure attachment styles used more positive behaviors in romantic relationships as compared to participants with insecure attachment styles. In contrast, insecure attachment styles in males did predict the frequency of negative behaviors in romantic relationships.

Overall, parental attachment has been found to be related to the romantic relationships of adolescents, at least in middle and late adolescence. Gender differences have been noted and may be related to the types of relationship qualities and interactions assessed.
However, the limited number of studies of the association between parental attachment in adolescence and romantic relationship quality make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions with regard to this association, warranting further research in this area. As stated previously, attachment is only one factor that has been examined in association with adolescents’ romantic relationships. In the following sections attention will be given to interparental conflict as it relates to adolescents’ romantic relationships.

*Witnessing Inteparental Conflict*

Inteparental conflict can be defined as disputes or disagreements that occur between parents in which they attempt to resolve a variety of issues including intimacy, power, and parenting (Emery, 1989). These disputes range in severity from minor verbal disagreements to violent, physical altercations. Although parents often try to protect their children from conflict, children are often exposed to interparental conflict, either directly or indirectly, daily (Cummings, Kouros, & Papp, 2007). The interparental conflicts that are directly witnessed by the child tend to be the most hostile and negative conflicts (Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2002) and have been found to be associated with a host of negative child behaviors (e.g., aggression) but it is important to note that less violent forms of conflict (e.g., unexpressed hostility or the “silent treatment”) have also been found to be related to child adjustment problems (Cummings, Ballard, & El-sheikh, 1991). Grych and Fincham (1990) suggested that although frequency and type of conflict behaviors exhibited are important in understanding the relation between interparental conflict and child adjustment it is just as important to examine children’s perceptions of the conflict. Children’s perceptions of these conflicts have been shown to be linked to their emotional responses to interparental conflicts.
and subsequent adjustment difficulties (Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994; Grych & Fincham, 1993).

Overall, empirical research supports a strong link between interparental conflict and child maladjustment (Grych & Fincham, 2001). Both “indirect effects models” (e.g., effects due to the negative influence of conflict on family processes) and “direct effects models” (e.g., effects due to exposure to conflict) have demonstrated the adverse effects interparental conflict can have in the lives of children (Cummings & Davies, 2002). The following sections will examine some of the adverse effects of interparental conflict on child and adolescent adjustment.

Witnessing interparental conflict and child and adolescent maladjustment: General overview. Interparental conflict has been found to predict a range of child behavioral and emotional problems. Buehler, Krishnakumar, and Stone (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of 68 studies examining the relation between interparental conflict and child and adolescent behavior problems. Witnessing interparental conflict was found to be related to multiple problem behaviors among children ages 5 to 18 including alcohol abuse, delinquency, and aggression. Additionally, witnessing interparental conflict has been shown to adversely affect the emotional state of children and adults (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, Papp, & Dukewich, 2002; Hall & Cummings, 1997). To illustrate, in a sample of college students, Turner and Kopiec (2006) found a relation between exposure to interparental conflict and subsequent mental disorder. Specifically, the probability of experiencing a major depressive disorder and alcohol abuse was significantly higher for participants who reported exposure to chronic interparental conflict in childhood and/or adolescence than for participants who did not report
these high levels of interparental conflict. Interparental conflict has also been found to be negatively associated with perceived competence, self-esteem, and identity integration (Bickahm & Fiese, 1997). Lastly, and most relevant to the current study, research suggests a link between interparental conflict and parent-child relationship factors as well as a link between interparental conflict and child and adolescent peer relations. These links will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Witnessing interparental conflict and parent-child relations. One way interparental conflict has been found to be related to child maladjustment is through its influence on family processes, including parenting behaviors and the parent-child relationship. Interparental conflict is associated with the use of more power assertive parenting, less positive reinforcement, and more inconsistent discipline (Margolin, Oliver, & Medina, 2001). A meta-analysis of interparental conflict and parenting behaviors conducted by Krishnakumar and Buehler (2000) found a positive relation between interparental conflict and harsh parenting styles and a negative association between interparental conflict and parental support and acceptance. Thus, the link between interparental conflict and negative child outcomes appears to be mediated, at least in part, by the impact of conflict on parenting styles (Buehler & Gerard, 2002).

Research has also established a link between interparental conflict and parent-child attachment. More specifically, findings indicate a negative correlation between interparental conflict and attachment security. For example, in a longitudinal study examining marital quality and child functioning, Howes and Markman (1989) found that mothers’, but not fathers’, high marital satisfaction, low conflict, and high communication quality were related
to child security of attachment. More recently, Forsch, Mangelsdorf, and McHale (2000) examined the relation between marital behavior and security of preschooler-parent attachment and found similar results. Couples were evaluated at 6 months postpartum and again when their child was 3 years old. Findings indicated that marital conflict at 6 months postpartum predicted less secure preschooler-mother attachment but not preschooler-father attachment. Marital conflict at 3 years was found to be associated with less secure attachment with mother and father at 3 years. Given the evidence of this link within the parent-child relationship, it is plausible that the link also exists within the parent-adolescent relationship. However, research examining this link is limited.

Witnessing interparental conflict and peer relations. Observing their parents’ interactions provides children and adolescents with a model for relating in their own social interactions. Those who observe their parents as emotionally unavailable and lacking in conflict resolution skills are more likely to display similar behaviors in their own social relationships (Emery, 1982). In a study designed to examine the relation between marital conflict and recent divorce with social and cognitive competence in adolescents, Long, Forehand, Fauber, and Brody (1987) found that teachers rated children from high-conflict homes as being less socially competent and having more conduct problems than children from less conflict ridden homes. Similar findings were reported more recently by Vanderwater and Lansford (1998). In their study of 10- to 17- year old children and adolescents, children in families characterized by high interparental conflict were more likely to have difficulties with their peers than were children from families characterized by low interparental conflict. These findings held up regardless of family structure (e.g., married,
Although links have been established between interparental conflict and children’s and adolescent’s general peer relations, a review of the literature reveals that research examining the link between interparental conflict and adolescent romantic relationships, in particular, is limited. Kinsfogel and Grych (2004) reported that most studies have focused on interparental violence rather than less severe interparental conflict. However, given that associations have been found between interparental conflict and other factors related to adolescent adjustment, and given that most adolescents have likely witnessed some level of interparental conflict, this remains an important area for further research. Some of the studies that have established a link between interparental conflict and adolescents’ romantic relationships will be discussed next.

In research by Reese-Weber and associates, perceived interparental conflict was related to the use of poor conflict resolution strategies by adolescents in their own romantic relationships (Reese-Weber & Bertle-Haring, 1998; Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005). However, this relation was mediated by parent-adolescent conflict resolution strategies, suggesting that more of a process orientation should be taken when examining this relation. Long-term effects have also been documented. Burns and Dunlop (2002) found that children from high conflict families had more difficulties forming and maintaining intimate relationships as young adults than did children from families who did not exhibit such high levels of conflict. Conger, Cui, Bryant, and Elder (2000) also examined the long-term effects of parents’ interpersonal skills on their children’s romantic relationship competence. Findings indicated that parental interactions characterized as high in warmth and low in hostility when children
were in the 7th grade were predictive of those same qualities in the romantic relationships of their young adult children (mean age = 20.7 years) eight years later. Parenting behavior (e.g., inconsistent discipline) was found as a mediator of this association.

Studies discussed in this section provide support for the examination and documentation of the link between interparental conflict and the quality of late adolescents’ romantic relationship quality. This discussion has also provided data for informing process oriented approaches to the examination of this link. For example, parenting behavior has been found to mediate the link between interparental conflict and children’s romantic relationship quality. Factors related to the parent-child subsystem within the larger family system are numerous. Therefore it is plausible that there are other factors related to the parent-child relationship that may aid in explaining the aforementioned link. For the purposes of this study, parental attachment is the hypothesized mediator between interparental conflict and late adolescents’ romantic relationship quality. More specific research supporting this conceptualization will be explored next.

**Witnessing Interparental Conflict, Parental Attachment, and Romantic Relationship Quality**

The current study was designed to examine the association between adolescents’ perceptions of interparental conflict and their current romantic relationship quality as mediated by attachment to their mothers. A thorough examination of the literature revealed three studies that are most relevant to the current mediation model. The first study was designed to examine the associations among family structure (e.g., divorced, non-divorced), marital conflict, quality of attachment to parents, and adolescents’ attitudes about love and sex (Ensign & Clark, 1998). In this study 101, college students completed three self-report
measures assessing the variables of interest. Measures included the Marital Conflict Scale, the Parental Attachment Questionnaire, and the Attitudes about Love and Sex questionnaire. Researchers were interested in (a) whether or not divorce and parental conflict were related to level of intimacy in college students’ romantic relationships, (b) whether or not there was a stronger correlation between parental conflict and intimacy than there was between family structure and intimacy, and (c) whether or not divorce and parental conflict were associated with attachment.

Findings indicated a negative correlation between parental conflict and intimacy in college students’ romantic relationships. There was also a negative relationship between divorce and intimacy in college student’s romantic relationships. However this association was weaker than the association between parental conflict and intimacy, suggesting that parental conflict may have a stronger influence on children than whether or not parents are divorced. Reports of parental conflict were also found to be negatively associated with parental attachment. Specifically, as participant’s reports of parental conflict increased their reports of closeness in the parent-child relationship, affective quality of attachment, and parental fostering of autonomy and emotional support decreased.

It should be noted that although Ensign and Clark (1998) examined most of the same variables of interest to the current study, the authors did not examine possible processes through which these variables may have been related. Individual associations were examined but no attempt was made to explore how all variables examined in this study may have been interrelated (e.g., moderators or mediators of the parental conflict/romantic quality association). Nor were possible gender differences in any of the identified links (e.g.,
conflict/attachment link) assessed. However, the study was limited by its small sample size, which may have precluded additional probing. Also, although the authors repeatedly discussed the “intimacy level” of the college students’ romantic relationships, it is unclear how the Attitudes about Love and Sex measure actually assessed this variable. This measure was developed from a measure assessing six love styles, but there was no indication as to how this translated into level of intimacy. Future research would benefit from a clearer indication of what factors are being assessed within the “quality of romantic relationship” domain. There are a plethora of factors that could fall under the umbrella of “romantic relationship quality” and unless the factors are clearly identified within future research, it will be difficult to discuss or organize findings in a meaningful way to inform interventions.

Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, and Semel (2002) examined the associations among domestic violence, child abuse, quality of attachment to parent, parent and adolescent mental health, and current relationship functioning of adolescents. Participants included 111 pairs of mothers and their adolescents, ages 14 to 16. Mothers completed a self-report measure of their experiences of domestic violence within the last year and in their most recent previous relationship. Adolescent attachment was assessed using a modified version of the Adult Attachment Scale and the quality of their peer relationships was assessed using the Network of Relationships Inventory, the Perceived Social Support scale and the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory. The authors hypothesized that witnessing domestic violence and/or experiencing child abuse would be related to insecure attachment styles and unsatisfactory or abusive relationships with best friends and romantic partners. Attachment style was hypothesized to mediate the effects of witnessing and/or experiencing family
violence on peer relationships. As expected, witnessing domestic violence and experiencing child abuse were significantly related to attachment style such that reports of witnessing or experiencing family violence were negatively associated with secure attachment and positively associated with avoidant attachment. However, attachment security was found to significantly mediate only the relation between experiencing family violence and satisfaction in the best friendship. Family violence was found to be unrelated to adolescent’s romantic relationship satisfaction and therefore mediation was not tested for this model. Violence in the family of origin was a significant predictor of current dating violence; however, attachment was not established as a mediator of this relation. These findings suggest that attachment may not influence dating violence during middle adolescence. Intimate relationships established during middle adolescence may not have as many of the qualities of a significant attachment bond as relationships formed later, which may preclude these early relationships from being strongly associated with attachment styles.

One limitation of this study is that although the authors referred to “witnessing domestic violence,” the measure used to assess this concept was actually the mother’s reports of experienced domestic violence in which the mothers reported how often certain events had happened to them. Adolescents’ reports of what they actually witnessed were not assessed. This is unfortunate given the importance of children’s perceptions of interparental conflict to their adjustment (Grych & Fincham, 1990). In addition, though the authors made a general statement that gender had an effect on some of their outcomes, the limited sample size prevented the authors from being able to adequately explore these possibilities. The authors also report recruiting 2% of their sample from shelters, 4% from at-risk teen programs, and
94% from the community and suggest that one of the strengths of their study is the use of a
generalizable community sample but it is unclear whether participants at-risk for domestic
violence and/or child abuse may have been overrepresented in the sample utilized.

In a similar study, interparental conflict, attachment, and adolescents’ marital
expectations and romantic experiences were evaluated by Steinberg, Davila, and Fincham
(2006). Study participants included 96 early adolescent girls (mean age = 13.24; \(SD = 0.5\))
and their parents. Parents completed a 12-item self report measure assessing their experience
of marital conflict. Adolescents were also asked to report their perceptions of interparental
conflict and their reactions to that conflict using the Children’s Perception of Interparental
Conflict Scale. Attachment security was examined using the Relationship Questionnaire, a 4-
item measure that requires adolescents to rate how much each item describes their
relationship style with their parents using a 7-point scale. The Family Attachment Interview
was also completed as a second measure of attachment.

Steinberg et al. (2006) hypothesized that the relation between perceptions of
interparental conflict and romantic outcomes would be mediated by attachment security.
Negative perceptions of interparental conflict were expected to be related to maladaptive
marital expectations and romantic experiences through attachment insecurity. Results
supported this hypothesis. Adolescent girls who perceived high levels of interparental
conflict reported higher levels of intimacy avoidance and anxiety about abandonment which
in turn was related to pessimism about future relationships, engaging in risky romantic
experiences, being turned down for a date, and having gone on a “bad date.” The authors
emphasized that neither mothers’ nor fathers’ perceptions of marital conflict were found to
be related to any of the outcome measures examined in this study; rather, it was the adolescents’ perceptions of this conflict that was most important in terms of predicting adolescents’ reports of their romantic experiences and marital expectations.

Although this study provides support for the current model there are some noteworthy limitations. First, the study only included 7th and 8th grade female participants, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. This study was also limited in that single-item measures were used to examine the romantic outcome variables. Further, as the authors point out, the variables chosen may be indicative of romantic relationships in early adolescence but they may not represent characteristics of intimate relationships established in late adolescence and adulthood.

Both of the aforementioned studies found an association between reported interparental conflict and attachment. Specifically, as levels of reported interparental conflict increased attachment security decreased. However, findings regarding attachment as a mediator between interparental conflict and adolescent romantic relationships were mixed. One possible explanation for these mixed findings may have to do with how the quality of adolescents’ romantic relationships was assessed. Levendosky et al. defined quality of peer relationships as satisfaction within these relationships (e.g., “how good is your relationship with this person”). Steinberg et al. (2006) examined adolescents’ expectations about future happiness in relationships and marriage and normative (e.g., “asking someone out on a date”) and risky/maladaptive (e.g., “dating a married person or someone involved in another relationship”) romantic experiences. Given the complexity of romantic relationships and the many factors that contribute to their development, influences on the quality of these
relationships may vary depending on how quality is defined. Research examining the link between interparental conflict and the romantic relationship quality of adolescents is growing, however, extant literature has yet to systematically and clearly determine if the existence and/or strength of this link may be related to the different components (e.g., commitment, affection) of romantic relationship quality. Additionally, both studies were limited by relatively small sample sizes limiting their generalizability. In spite of their limitations, extant studies provide a starting point for further research examining the link between adolescents’ experiences in their family of origin and the quality of later romantic relationships as mediated by factors related to the parent-adolescent relationship. Further research is needed to help clarify the nature of some of these relationships.

Statement of the Problem

Romantic relationships take center stage in the lives of many adolescents, with over half of 12 to 18 year olds in the United States reporting having been involved in a romantic relationship in the last 18 months (Bochey & Furman, 2003). Additionally, adolescents spend increasing amounts of time with romantic partners and by ages 15 to 16 have been found to interact more with romantic partners than with parents, siblings, or friends (Bouchey & Furman, 2003). Romantic relationships and dating experiences are strong predictors of academic, social, and emotional adjustment of adolescents (Furman & Shaffer, 2003). Given the importance of these relationships to the lives of adolescents and the amount of time spent engaged in or thinking about romantic partners and experiences, it is important to examine factors that may play a role in the development of these relationships. Interparental conflict and attachment can be considered two such factors.
Research provides support for associations among witnessing interparental conflict, attachment, and adolescents’ romantic relationship quality. However, this research has been limited in quantity and scope. There is substantial support for associations between interparental conflict and a variety of childhood adjustment factors. Unfortunately, adolescents were largely neglected by this research until recently. There are also some methodological issues with studies that have been conducted. First, relatively small sample sizes have often limited generalizability and have also affected researchers’ ability to examine possible gender differences in relations among variables. Focusing on domestic violence and neglecting the possible deleterious effects of interparental conflict to the development of adolescent relationships has also been an issue. Although domestic violence is an extreme form of interparental conflict, research suggests that children are more often exposed to less violent forms of interparental conflict and that this type of interparental conflict also plays a role in the lives of children and adolescents (Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, & El-Sheikh, 1989; Cummings et. al., 1991, Tschann, Pasch, Flores, Marin, Baisch, & Wibbelsman, 2009). An examination of the role of interparental conflict in the lives of adolescents, in general, would be useful and relevant to the majority of adolescents versus having data driven by a subgroup of children and adolescents who have primarily been exposed to extreme forms of interparental violence. Lastly, there has been a call for research to move beyond simply examining the associations among interparental conflict and child adjustment but to work toward gaining a better understanding of the processes that may underlie this association. The link between interparental conflict and child adjustment has been established. However, the mechanisms through which this link operates require further
The current study sought to add to a growing body of research into possible factors associated with the quality of adolescents’ romantic relationships. Specifically, attachment was examined as a mediator of the association between interparental conflict and romantic relationship quality in a sample of late adolescent college students (ages 18-19). The current study also aimed to determine whether gender played a moderating role in the association between attachment and quality of romantic relationships. Similar research has found a significant relation between attachment security in females and their interpersonal relationship functioning but not for males. The current study was designed to add to existing knowledge by utilizing and expanding upon existing methodologies with the ultimate goal of advancing knowledge regarding adolescent romantic relationships. To this end, the following hypotheses and research questions were tested:

**Hypotheses**

1. Ratings of Witnessed Conflict will account for a significant amount of variance in quality of current relationships with romantic partners such that there will be a negative association between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Social Support in romantic relationships and a positive association between Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Negative Interchanges in romantic relationships.

2. Ratings of Witnessed Conflict will account for a significant amount of variance in ratings of Attachment to mothers. Specifically, it is expected that there will be a
negative association between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Attachment of mothers.

3. Ratings of Attachment to mothers will account for a significant amount of variance in quality of current relationships with romantic partners such that ratings of Attachment will account for a significant amount of the variance in ratings of Social Support and ratings of Negative Interchanges with romantic partners. Specifically, it is expected that there will be a positive association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Social support and a negative association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Negative Interchanges.

4. Ratings of Attachment will mediate the relation between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Social support and Negative Interchanges with romantic partners.

Research Questions

1. Is the association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Negative Interchanges with romantic partners moderated by gender, with the association stronger for men than for women?

2. Is the association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Social Support with romantic partners moderated by gender with the association stronger for women than for men?
Method

Participants

Data for the present study were gathered in conjunction with a larger study examining family violence, conflict resolution, attachment, mental health, and relationship functioning in late adolescent college students. Participants in the larger study \((n = 249)\) who completed all measures for the current investigation were included in the sample for this study. Participants were 210 (112 male, 98 female) undergraduate students, ages 18 and 19 (mean age = 18.4), enrolled in Introduction to Psychology at a large southeastern U.S. university. Of those 210 participants, the racial distribution was approximately 79% Caucasian. With regard to relationship status approximately 53% were not currently dating, 37% were dating one person exclusively and 10% were dating multiple people (See Table 1). It should be noted that participants were not asked whether or not their relationships were heterosexual.

As partial fulfillment of course requirements, students had the option of completing six hours of research credits or completing a three-page journal article review. Participation in the current research provided students with an opportunity to receive two of the six required research credits.

Procedures

A description of the larger study was posted on a university website established for the recruitment of research participants. The study allowed for a maximum of 15 students per data collection session. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes. Participants were able to sign up for the study via the website and in keeping with university policy, participants who did not show up for experiments without having given adequate prior notice were
penalized with a loss of one credit hour.

Table 1. *Description of Participant Characteristics (N = 210)*

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<tr>
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<th>Number</th>
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<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td>00.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Science or Engineering</td>
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<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Science</td>
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<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>06.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>06.2</td>
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<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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<td>09.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>02.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Table 1 (continued)

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<th>Relationship Status</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>00.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Currently Dating</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating one Person</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dating Several People</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During data collection, participants were provided with two copies of an informed consent form that was read aloud by a trained research assistant. Following an opportunity for questions, participants were asked to sign and return one of the informed consent forms. The second form was theirs to keep for later reference. Participants were then given necessary protocols and Opscan sheets for the measures to be completed during the study. Measures were administered one at a time. For counterbalancing, each week during the study, set 1, which included three measures, and set 2, which included the remaining three measures, were rotated so that data collection sessions for alternating weeks started with different sets of measures. One set of three measures included the Relationship Questionnaire (not included in the current study), the Network of Relationship Inventory, and the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The other set of measures included the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), the Conflict Resolution – Adolescent measure (not included in the
current study), and the Brief Symptom Index (not included in the current study).

Following the administration of all measures, participants were read a debriefing statement detailing the purpose of the study and providing phone numbers of all lead researchers in case participants had follow-up questions or concerns. Flyers with information about the university counseling center were also made available to any students showing signs of or indicating distress as a result of their participation in the study. Participants were assigned numbers that were used to identify completed measures and insure confidentiality of responses. All materials are being kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Measures

Witnessed family conflict. The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) was used to assess witnessed interparental conflict. The CTS was developed to examine behaviors family members use to solve conflicts with each other. This measure is composed of two forms, the parent-to-parent form and the parent-to-child form. Each form consists of three subscales: Reasoning (items 1-3), Verbal Aggression (items 4-9), and Physical Aggression (items 10-19). For the purposes of the current study, only the parent-to-parent form was utilized. To assess interparental conflict, participants utilized a 6-point scale (Once = 1, Twice = 2, 3-5 times = 3, 6-10 times = 4, 11-20 times = 5, more than 20 times = 6, Don’t know = 0) to report the frequency with which 19 different conflict resolution strategies were used during arguments between their parents in the last three years. For the current study termed score for “Witnessed Conflict”, was derived from the CTS. This score is a combination of the scores reported on both the Verbal Aggression and Physical Aggression subscales. Scores for these two subscales was combined based on previous research utilizing
undergraduate participants in which the incidents of reported witnessed physical aggression were low (e.g., Styron & Janoff-Bulman, 1997).

The developers of the CTS report that internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, ranges from .42 to .96 across the two forms and three subscales of the CTS (Straus, 1990). More specifically, reported alpha for the Reasoning scale of the parent-to-parent form was .50 and alphas for the Verbal Aggression and Physical Aggression scales were .80 and .83 respectively. Low reliabilities of the Reasoning scale likely stem from the limited number of items (e.g., three) used to assess this construct (Straus & Gelles, 1989). Ahern (2006) found internal consistency of the parent-to-parent CTS form to range from .69 to .87 based on the larger data base from which the current study drew participants, with the lowest reliabilities reported for Witnessed Reasoning.

College students’ retrospective accounts of family violence and parental reports of such violence were used to establish the concurrent validity of the CTS. Correlations between adolescents’ and parents’ ratings range from .19 on the Reasoning scale to .51 on the Verbal Aggression scale and .64 on the Physical Aggression scale. Additionally, with regard to validity, Cantrell, MacIntyre, Sharkey, and Thompson (1995) found that violent parental conflict tactics, as measured by the CTS, was predictive of violence in both same-sex and opposite-sex peer relationships of college students. Breslin, Riggs, O’Leary, and Arias (1990) found similar results utilizing the CTS in which witnessing interparental physical aggression was found to be positively related to reports of dating aggression. The CTS was chosen for the current study because it is the most commonly used measure of partner aggression and is widely applicable to family violence research (e.g., Kolbo, Blakely, &
Engleman, 1996).

*Parental attachment.* Attachment to mother was assessed using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The inventory consists of 75 items: 25 items relate to attachment to mother, 25 relate to father attachment, and 25 relate to peer attachment. For the purposes of this study only those items relating to maternal attachment were utilized. Example items include “My mother respects my feelings,” “I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest,” and “Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed and foolish.” Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating “almost never true” and 5 indicating “almost always or always true.” Using the recommended scoring practices, an overall attachment score was derived for maternal attachment by reverse-scoring the negatively worded items and then summing the scores for the 25 items. Possible scores thus range from 25 to 125. Higher scores indicate more secure attachment than lower scores.

Armsden and Greenberg (1987) report Cronbach’s alpha of the overall maternal attachment items as .87. Additionally, the average three-week test/re-test reliability was reported as .93. In terms of validity, the IPPA is a widely used measure that has been found to be related to multiple outcome variables in adolescents including self-esteem (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), psychological well-being (Kenny & Perez, 1996), depression, separation anxiety, and hopelessness (Armsden, McCauley, Greenberg, Burke, & Mitchell, 1990) and identity formation (Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994). Papini, Roggman, and Anderson (1991) also found a positive correlation between IPPA scores and ratings of family cohesion and expressiveness.
Quality of relationships. Participant’s perception of the quality of their relationships with their best friends and romantic partners was assessed using the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI) (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Participants were presented with a 24 item inventory in which they were asked to respond to questions about the aforementioned relationships on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating “little or none” and 5 indicating “the most.” Each question relates to one of eight scales, Companionship (e.g., “How much free time do you spend with this person?”), Intimacy (e.g., “How much do you share your secrets and private feelings with this person?”), Nurturance (e.g., How much do you protect and look out for this person?”), Affection (e.g., How much does this person really care about you?”), Satisfaction (e.g., “How good is your relationship with this person?”), Conflict (e.g., How much do you and this person argue with each other?”), Antagonism (e.g., “How much do you and this person hassle or nag one another?”) and Relative Power (e.g., “Between you and this person, who tends to be the BOSS in this relationship?”). Each scale is comprised of three items whose scores are averaged to derive scale scores. Scale scores thus range from 1-5. In addition to the scale scores, two factor scores, Social Support and Negative Interchanges, can also be derived. The Social Support factor is determined by generating a mean score based on all items from the Companionship, Intimacy, Nurturance, Affection, and Satisfaction scales and the Negative Interchanges factor is determined by the mean of items from the Conflict and Antagonism scales. These two factor scores were utilized in the current study.

In the current sample, internal consistency coefficients range from .82 to .94 for the seven scales. The one-month test-retest reliability of the NRI scales range from .72 to .76
(Connolly & Konarski, 1994). In support of validity of the NRI, scores on the NRI have been found to be related to overall negative or positive perceptions of the family environment (Creasey, Myers, Epperson, & Taylor, 1989), interpersonal skills and adjustment in adolescence (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), and perceptions of peer acceptance in adolescence (Connolly & Konarski, 1994).

Results

Procedure to Account for Missing Data

The nature and format of the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) resulted in missing data. This is consistent with previous studies using the CTS (e.g., Merrill, Hervig, & Milner 1996). In the present study participants were asked to rate the number of times they witnessed conflict on a scale of 1 to 6. They also had the options of responding “N” for “never” and “0” for “Don’t Know.” A majority of participants utilized the “Don’t Know” option for at least one item. Participants were asked to complete ratings for their mother and father separately. Thirty participants left the “Father” ratings blank and two participants left the “Mother” ratings blank. This was likely due to the absence of either a mother or father figure during their adolescent years. To increase the amount of useable data, the following procedures were utilized to address the missing data.

First, if more than 20% of items were left blank or endorsed as “Don’t Know” for an individual, that scale was not included in the analyses. Specifically, if two or more of the six Verbal Aggression subscale items were missing, the subscale for that participant was eliminated from the analyses. Likewise if three or more of the nine items on the Physical Aggression subscale were missing, the subscale for that participant was eliminated from the
analyses. For those participants whose subscales contained less than 20% of missing data, the mean for that subscale was substituted for the missing data. Next, when the Verbal and Physical Aggression subscales were combined to form the Witnessed Conflict composite, if one subscale was deemed unusable due to missing data, the mean for the other subscale was used. This technique was employed 19 times (4% of participants).

Missing data also resulted when participants failed to supply ratings of either their mother’s or their father’s conflict tactics. This was problematic since mother and father ratings were combined to create an overall Witnessed Conflict score. To account for this type of missing data, the mean score for “Mother” was used in place of the aggregate score in the absence of the “Father” scale and vice versa. This technique was employed 6 times (2% of participants).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptives for all relevant variables used in the present analyses were calculated; means, standard deviations, ranges, and skewness, are shown in Table 2. Intercorrelations among all major variables are presented in Table 3. To aid in interpretation of CTS scores, it is noted that the possible range for Witnessed Conflict variable was 0 to 6. The mean of Witnessed Conflict on the CTS ($M = .86$, $SD = .76$, Range $= 0 – 3.917$) was low and positively skewed. The majority of participants did not indicate having witnessed conflict in their nuclear family. Based on the IPPA, the mean attachment score (possible range of 25 to 125) for the full sample was $97.73$ ($SD = 17.79$), with a range of 44 to 125. Scores revealed that participants viewed their attachment to their mothers as fairly secure. No participants obtained the lowest score of attachment possible. Lastly, with regard to romantic
relationship quality (possible range for subscales = 1 – 5), most participants reported feeling supported in their relationships with their romantic partners ($M = 3.49$, $SD = .99$, Range = 1 – 5). Ratings of negative interchanges were positively skewed with a large percentage of participants reporting minimal negative interchanges within their romantic relationships ($M = 1.84$, $SD = .74$, Range = 1 – 4).

Given the positive skewness of both witnessed conflict and negative interchanges logarithmic (base10) transformations were conducted in an attempt to improve normality. The logarithmic transformation of the witnessed conflict variable reduced the skewness from 1.145 to .683 while the logarithmic transformation of the negative interchanges variable reduced the skewness from 1.095 to .223. Despite transformations skewness remained problematic. Intercorrelations utilizing transformed variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Skew and Standard Error of Skew for Study Variables

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Witnessed Conflict</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
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<td>Social Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Interchanges</td>
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<td>.74</td>
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Table 3. *Correlations Among Primary Variables*

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<th>4</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attachement</td>
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<td>Social Support</td>
<td>-.108</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Interchanges</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.081</td>
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*p < .05  **p < .001

Table 4. *Correlations Utilizing Transformed Variables*

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<td>Log10 Witnessed Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attachement</td>
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<td>Log 10 Negative Interchanges</td>
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<td>.024</td>
<td>.099</td>
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</table>

*p < .05  **p < .001

*Tests of Hypotheses*

Data analyses addressing hypotheses 1 through 4 followed procedures described by Baron and Kenney (1986) for the testing of mediation. First, Witnessed Conflict must account for a significant amount of the variance in Social Support and Negative Interchanges. Secondly, Witnessed Conflict must account for a significant amount of the variance in Attachment. Next, Attachment must also account for a significant amount of the variance in
Social Support and Negative Interchanges. Lastly, if each of these conditions are met the effect of Witnessed Conflict on Social Support and Negative Interchanges must be significantly reduced after controlling for the effect of Attachment.

For hypothesis one, it was expected that Witnessed Conflict scores would account for a significant amount of the variance in the reported quality of current relationships with romantic partners, such that there would be a negative association between Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Social Support and a positive association between Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Negative Interchanges. This hypothesis was not supported, $\beta(205) = -.108, p > .05$ and $\beta(205) = .014, p > .05$ respectively. For hypothesis two, it was expected that Witnessed Conflict scores would account for a significant amount of the variance in ratings of Attachment to mothers, such that there would be a negative association between Witnessed Conflict and Attachment. This hypothesis was also not supported, $\beta(210) = -.039, p > .05$. For hypothesis three, it was expected that ratings of Attachment to mothers would account for a significant amount of the variance in ratings of quality of current relationships with romantic partners, such that there would be a positive association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Social Support and a negative association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Negative Interchanges. This hypothesis was not supported, $\beta(205) = .026, p > .05$ and $\beta(205) = .027, p > .05$ respectively. Lastly, it was hypothesized that the relation between Witnessed Conflict and ratings of quality of current relationships with romantic partners would be mediated by Attachment to mothers.
While the preconditions for mediation were not met as outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), recent arguments have been made that the traditional causal steps approach to examining mediation is flawed in that it is not necessary for the independent and dependent variable to be significantly related in testing mediation (Hayes, 2009). New procedures for testing mediation or the indirect effect have been outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004; 2008) who do not include the same requirements of Baron and Kenny or the assumptions of the Sobel test, which frequently accompanies Baron and Kenny’s approach. More specifically, Preacher and Hayes (2004) note that their procedure does not make the assumption that the distribution of the mediation effects is normal nor is the approach based mainly on large-sample theory; as result this approach is more appropriate for relatively small sample sizes. The new procedures utilize bootstrapping, a nonparametric sampling procedure which uses $k$ samples of size $n$ taken from the original sample. These resamples are then used in calculating the indirect effect. Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals are estimated for the indirect effects. Significant indirect effects are present when zero is not contained in the confidence interval.

As a post-hoc, analyses were conducted following the nonparametric bootstrapping approach for testing indirect effects proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008). Preacher and Hayes (2008) have created a SPSS macro which was utilized with $n = 5000$ bootstrap resamples to assess the indirect effects of maternal attachment on the relations between interparental conflict and quality of current relationships with romantic partners. Results did not indicate significant indirect effects in that zero was contained in the 95% confidence interval for both models tested (see Table 5).
Table 5. *Bootstrap Results for the Indirect Effects of Attachment on Interparental Conflict and Quality of Current Relationships with Romantic Partners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Independent variable, Dependent variable</th>
<th>Point Estimate</th>
<th>BCa 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>Interparental Conflict, Social Support</td>
<td>-.0011</td>
<td>-.0317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.0097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interparental Conflict, Negative Interchanges</td>
<td>-.0010</td>
<td>-.0240 .0062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there was no support for the role of attachment as a mediator, it is possible that high levels of attachment security could serve as a buffer for individuals who witness conflict between their parents; low levels of attachment security could exacerbate the impact of witnessing conflict between parents. Thus, post hoc analyses were conducted to examine the moderating role of attachment in the link between interparental conflict and quality of romantic relationships. First, whether the association between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Social Support was moderated by ratings of Attachment was examined. The interaction between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Attachment was not significant, $\beta(205) = -.065$, $p > .05$. Next, an examination of whether the association between ratings of Witnessed Conflict and ratings of Negative Interchanges was moderated by ratings of Attachment was conducted. The interaction was not significant, $\beta(205) = .240$, $p > .05$. In summary, attachment security did not impact the strength or direction of the link between
Test of Research Questions

In order to address research questions one and two Baron and Kenny’s (1986) recommended procedures for testing moderation models and procedures from Aiken and West (1991) to probe significant interactions were used. For research question one, tests were conducted to examine whether the association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Negative Interchanges with romantic partners was moderated by gender. The interaction between ratings of Attachment and gender was significant, $\beta(205) = -.196, p < .05$. However, when probed independently neither simple slope was significantly different from 0. In other words, while the slope of the regression line representing the association between attachment and negative interchanges for females was significantly different from the slope for males, neither slope was significant. Question two was whether the association between ratings of Attachment and ratings of Social Support with romantic partners was moderated by gender. The interaction between ratings of Attachment and gender was not significant, $\beta(205) = .055, p < .05$. Therefore, no moderation was found and the hypothesis was not supported.

Discussion

Given the importance of romantic relationships in the lives of adolescents and the potential impact these relationships can have across multiple domains of functioning it is important to gain a better understanding of factors that may influence adolescents’ relationships with romantic partners. Of particular interest to the present study were adolescents’ experiences in their family of origin as they were related to the quality of later romantic relationships. Specifically, the current study was designed to examine whether or
not adolescents’ quality of attachment to mothers mediated the association between conflict the adolescent observed between parents and romantic relationship quality. An examination of the results and suggested directions for future research will be addressed in the following sections.

Witnessed Interparental Conflict and Quality of Romantic Relationships

Witnessing conflict between parents in early adolescence was expected to predict subsequent romantic relationship quality in late adolescence. A limited number of studies have found a link between interparental conflict and adolescents’ romantic relationships (Ensign & Clark, 1998; Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, & Semel, 2002). However, in the current study, witnessing conflict between one’s parents was not found to predict the quality of one’s own romantic relationships in late adolescence. One possible reason for the non-significant results could be the way in which witnessed interparental conflict was defined and subsequent lack of variability on this construct in the current study. The measure of witnessed conflict between parents included a combination of behaviors considered to be physically aggressive and verbally aggressive. Both types of aggression were included based on previous research utilizing undergraduate participants in which the incidents of reported witnessed physical aggression were low (e.g., Styron & Janoff-Bulman, 1997). This was consistent with the findings of the present study in that participants reported very low rates of witnessed interparental conflict in their homes. In fact, over half of the participants in the current study did not report having witnessed any interparental conflict in the prior three years. It is possible that the expected linkage will be evident only in samples overselected for adolescents at risk for higher interparental conflict.
It is possible that interparental conflict predicts quality of romantic relationships only for certain adolescents. That is, there might be moderators of the link between interparental conflict and quality of relationships with romantic partners. Past research indicates that the quality of conflict resolution used by parents might moderate links between frequency of conflicts and adjustment of youth. Specifically, research has found that children react differently to destructive (e.g., physical and verbal anger) versus constructive (problem-solving, support) conflict strategies used by parents, with constructive conflict tactics eliciting positive responses in children (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Papp; 2003 & Goeke-Morey, Cummings, Harold, & Shelton, 2003). The current study did not include a measure of the outcome of interparental conflicts. It is possible that the conflicts were resolved positively and occurred within the context of an otherwise healthy and stable relationship which served to moderate the effects of the witnessed conflicts. Additionally, other variables not measured in the current study, such as a strong social support system, may have served as a buffer from some of the possible negative effects of witnessing interparental conflict. To illustrate, Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit and Bates (2000) conducted a study of peer relations of children who had witnessed conflict between their parents. They found that preschool children who had few friendships and experienced harsh and hostile family environments, including inter-parental conflict, had a higher likelihood of being victimized by peers in elementary school; the relation between interparental conflict and peer victimization dissolved for those children who had more friends. Perhaps positive peer relations could also buffer older adolescents from interparental conflict. Such moderators should be examined in future investigations.
Witnessed Interparental Conflict and Attachment

Past research has found that as conflict between parents increases, mother-child attachment security decreases (Forsch, Mangelsdorf, & McHale, 2000). Although research focusing on adolescents is limited, it was expected that results in the current study would be similar to those found in previous studies examining parent-child relationships and the few studies examining this association in parent-adolescent relationships. However, there was not a significant association between participants’ history of witnessing interparental conflict and current attachment to their mothers.

Limitations discussed above with regard to restricted variability in conflict between parents also apply here. Additionally, similar to the relation between interparental conflict and romantic relationship quality, other variables may play a role in the relation between interparental conflict and attachment. In their examination of the impact of interparental conflict on adolescents Grych, Raynor, and Fosco (2004) found that adolescents’ attachment was related to their appraisals of interparental conflict such that children who reported more secure maternal attachments made less threatening appraisals of interparental conflict. Similar to the aforementioned peer relationships, supportive parent-child relationships likely provide support and additional resources and buffers against some of the negative outcomes associated with high levels of interparental conflict. Therefore it may be that regardless of the levels of conflict witnessed by adolescents who score higher on ratings of attachment security they do not view these conflicts as negatively as adolescents who score lower on ratings of attachment security. Future research would need to look beyond the possible link between interparental conflict and attachment and examine children and adolescents’ conflict
appraisals as well.

*Attachment and Quality of Romantic Relationships*

Also contrary to expectation, there was no significant link between participants’ attachment to their mothers and the quality of their most recent romantic relationships. One possible explanation for this unexpected result may be related to the types of romantic relationships of participants in this study and the level of commitment and/or intimacy of those relationships. The Network of Relationships Questionnaire, which was used to assess the quality of their romantic relationships in the current study, required participants to answer questions considering their current or most recent romantic partner. However, the “most recent romantic partner” was not operationalized. Depending on participants’ interpretations and personal standards for what constitutes a romantic partner, participants could have conceivably been considering a wide variety of relationships when completing this questionnaire. Additionally, while some participants would have been considering current relationships (36% of participants reported dating one person, 10% reported dating several people, and 1% reported being engaged) a little over half (53%) of the participants would have been considering previous relationships because they were not currently involved in a romantic relationship. Although retrospective reports can provide valuable information there is evidence to suggest that these reports may be influenced by psychological and physical health status (Haggerty, Siefert, & Weinberger, 2010; Mordock, 2001). In addition, researchers have determined that relational stability is more complex than simply “intact” or “terminated”. Dailey, Pfiester, Beck, and Clark (2009) recently examined unstable “on-again/off-again” relationships and how they differed from other dating relationships. Almost
two thirds of 445 college students had experienced an on-off relationship at some point and about 40% of their participants’ current or most recent relationships were on-again/off-again. These relationships differed significantly from noncyclical relationships with regard to relationship quality and communication. It appears that the cyclical nature of adolescents’ relationships is an important relationship feature to be considered in the link between family characteristics (including interparental conflict and attachment) and quality of romantic relationships of older adolescents.

In addition to variations related to how relationships are perceived or defined, researchers examining the quality of romantic relationships have often defined “quality” differently. For example, Levendosky et. al. (2002) defined quality as satisfaction within relationships, Steinberg et. al. (2006) examined expectations about future happiness in relationships and risky/maladaptive romantic experiences, and Ensign and Clark (1998) explored “intimacy level”. In the current study quality of current romantic relationships was defined based on two factors -- social support (i.e., companionship, intimacy, nurturance, affection) and negative interchanges, which included conflict and antagonism. This is consistent with how Collins (2003) defined quality within the five-feature framework presented as essential to describing adolescents’ relationships. However, romantic relationships are complex and while the current study improves on past research by considering quality as multifaceted and clearly defining quality, other aspects of relationship quality might be more closely related to attachment.

Finally, participants in the current study were asked to report about the quality of a single relationship, either their current or most recent partner. Other investigators have asked
study participants to consider relationships in general. It is possible that the single relationship participants considered in the current study was not representative of the pattern of support and/or negative interchanges typical in their relationships.

*Attachment as a Mediator*

A primary goal of the current study was to test a proposed model in which attachment mediated the relation between witnessing interparental conflict and the quality of romantic relationships in adolescence. Given the lack of linkages among constructs, mediation was not supported by these data. Although there was no support for the role of attachment as a mediator, it was plausible that attachment security might serve as a buffer for individuals who witness conflict between their parents. This possibility was explored through post-hoc analyses. However, findings did not support attachment security playing a moderating role in the relation between interparental conflict and current romantic relationship functioning.

*Gender as a Moderator*

A limited number of extant research studies are available that examined gender differences in the link between adolescent attachment to mothers and characteristics of current romantic relationships. Overall, findings suggested that for females, but not males, attachment was related to various romantic relationship factors. Due to these research findings, a question was posed in the current study as to whether or not the association between ratings of attachment and ratings of romantic relationship quality were moderated by gender. Results indicated that the link between attachment security and current relationship quality did not differ for males and females; there was no significant link for either gender.
Strengths and Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

The current study sought to examine factors related to romantic relationship quality in later adolescence with the goals of closing several gaps in past research and improving on methods used in prior studies. Specifically, the current study adds to a limited body of research examining the associations among witnessing interparental conflict, attachment, and adolescents’ romantic relationship quality. Extensive research is available supporting the relation between conflict between parents and childhood adjustment but few studies have examined these relations in adolescents. To a large extent past studies have focused on domestic violence, ignoring the possible impact of less violent forms of interparental conflict. The current study did not limit interparental conflict to this extreme. Additionally, the current study moved beyond simply looking at the association between interparental conflict and child adjustment and examined a possible mechanism through which this association might exist.

In spite of these methodological advances, the current study is not without limitations. These limitations were noted in the discussion of findings above so they will be only briefly reviewed here. First, the utilization of college students as participants in the current study and utilization of self-report methodology may have contributed to the limited variability of study variables. This is particularly true in terms of risk for witnessing extreme forms of interparental conflict and willingness to report such personally sensitive family dynamics. Future studies may consider utilizing multiple informants, information gathered through social services, and/or court proceedings.

A second drawback of the current study was the focus on a single relationship that
might not have represented participants’ typical relationships in terms of support and negative interchanges. The quality of a single relationship of college students might not be related to attachment or conflict between their parents. Similar to a point made by Levendosky et. al. (2002) regarding intimate relationships in middle adolescence, it may be that a single relationship in college, at age 18 or 19, may not have as many qualities of a significant attachment bond as later relationships, which may in turn effect the association with parental attachment.

Third, while the current study examined one possible mechanism through which the relation between interparental conflict and children’s adjustment exists, many other mechanisms are possible. Studies should continue to consider the processes through which these links may or may not exist and comprehensive models should be tested to further our understanding of the complexities of associations among these constructs.

Fourth, significant changes occur from childhood to late adolescence and future research would benefit from a longitudinal examination of the interplay between interparental conflict, attachment security, and quality of romantic relationships as well as other possible individual and contextual variables. Although associations among interparental conflict, attachment, and romantic relationship quality were not found in the current study, there is precedence for such associations, particularly the association between interparental conflict and attachment in childhood, and future studies are needed to further explicate the developmental trajectory of romantic relationship quality. Romantic relationships are important in the lives of adolescents, laying the foundation for and reflecting future relationships. These relationships are not insignificant and their impact is not transitory, as
was once thought. Therefore, continued research in this area is encouraged to aid adolescents, parents, and clinicians in navigating this complex developmental period and in indentifying factors that may have a significant impact on the lives of adolescents.
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Appendix
Appendix A: Conflict Tactic Scale

If the parent(s) you lived with in the past three years was married or living with a partner at any time during your high school years, complete Part 1 of this questionnaire, then proceed to Part 2. If your parents were divorced and both were married or living with a partner, please complete the questionnaire for the parent with whom you lived with most often.

If the parent(s) you lived with in the past three years was not married or living with a partner at any time during your high school years, do not complete Part 1. Instead, go directly to Part 2.
**PART 1** No matter how well a couple get along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. Below are listed some things your mother/father and their partner might have done when they had an argument. Please circle the number that represents how many times *during your high school years*, your mother/father and her/his partner ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>If <em>never</em> during your high school years, did this EVER happen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Circle Y or N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = once  
2 = twice  
3 = 3-5 times  
4 = 6-10 times  
5 = 11-20 times  
6 = more than 20 times  
0 = Don't know

- **Discussed an issue calmly**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Got information to back up his/her side of things**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Brought in, or tried to bring in someone to help settle things**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Insulted or swore at the other person**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Sulked or refused to talk about an issue**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Stomped out of the room, house, or yard**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Cried**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Did or said something to spite the other**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Threatened to hit or throw something at the other person**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Threw something at the other person**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Slapped the other person**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Kicked, bit, or hit the other person with a fist**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Hit or tried to hit the other person with something**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Beat the other person up**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Choked the other person**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Threatened the other with a knife or gun**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N

- **Used a knife or fired a gun**...  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  1 2 3 4 5 6 0  
  Y  N
PART 2: Parents and teenagers have many different ways of trying to settle differences between them. Below is a list of some of the things that you and your mother or father might have done when you had a dispute. Please circle the number that represents how many times during your high school years your mother and father ... (Note: if you lived with only one parent, complete the questionnaire for that parent only).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussed an issue calmly</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got information to back up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his/her side of things</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brought in, or tried to bring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in someone to help settle things</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulted or swore at the other person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulked or refused to talk about an issue.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomped out of the room, house, or yard..</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cried</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did or said something to spite the other...</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened to hit or throw something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the other person</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threw something at the other person...........</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other..........</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slapped the other person</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicked, bit, or hit the other person with a fist.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit or tried to hit the other person with something</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat the other person up</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choked the other person</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened the other with a knife or gun...</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a knife or fired a gun</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If never during your high school years, did this EVER happen? Circle Y or N.
Appendix B: Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment

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his questionnaire asks about your relationships with important people in your life; your mother, and your close friends. Please read the directions to each part carefully.

Part I

Some of the following statements asks about your feelings about your mother or the person 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 circle the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost Never or Never True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Almost Always or Always True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My mother expects too much from me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I get upset easily around my mother.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My mother trusts my judgment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My mother has her own problems, so I don’t bother her with mine.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My mother helps me to understand myself better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I feel angry with my mother.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I don’t get much attention from my mother.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My mother helps me to talk about my difficulties.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. My mother understands me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I trust my mother.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. My mother doesn’t understand what I’m going through these days.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Network of Relationships Inventory

Everyone has a number of people who are important in his or her life. These questions ask about your relationships with each of the following people: your best friend and current or most recent romantic partner. Please answer the following questions about these three individuals. Sometimes the answers for different people may be the same, but sometimes they may be different.

1. How much free time do you spend with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
<th>The Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How much do you and this person get upset with or mad at each other?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How much do you and this person get on each other’s nerves?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
<th>The Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How much do you talk about everything with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
<th>The Most</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How much do you help this person with things she/he can’t do by her/himself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
<th>The Most</th>
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<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. How much does this person like or love you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. How satisfied are you with your relationship with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8. Who tells the other person what to do more often, you or this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/he always does</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>About the same</th>
<th>I often do</th>
<th>I always do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9. How good is your relationship with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10. How much do you play around and have fun with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
11. How much do you and this person disagree and quarrel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

12. How much do you and this person get annoyed with each other's behavior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

13. How much do you share your secrets and private feelings with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

14. How much do you protect and look out for this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

15. How much does this person really care about you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend
16. Between you and this person, who tends to be the BOSS in this relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>Always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
<th>S/he always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

17. How happy are you with the way things are between you and this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Extremely Much</th>
<th>The Most</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

18. How often do you go places and do enjoyable things with this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>Always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
<th>S/he always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

19. How much do you and this person argue with each other?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>Always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
<th>S/he always does</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend

20. How much do you and this person hassle or nag one another?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>Always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
<th>S/he always does</th>
<th>Always do</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend
21. How much do you talk to this person about things that you don’t want others to know?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. How much do you take care of this person?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. How much does this person have a strong feeling of affection (loving or liking) toward you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

24. In your relationship with this person, who tends to take charge and decide what should be done?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S/he always does</th>
<th>S/he often does</th>
<th>About the same</th>
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