



Affective and behavioral responses to friends who neglect their friends for dating partners: influences of gender, jealousy and perspective

MELANIE A. ROTH AND JEFFREY G. PARKER

Adolescents in the ninth grade ($n = 75$) responded to a hypothetical situation involving an individual who neglects their friend as a result of their transition to steady dating. Results indicated that 53 per cent of girls and 32 per cent of boys reported past personal exclusion by their best friend who they perceived to be preoccupied by a romantic partner. Only 21 per cent of girls and 19 per cent of boys reported that they had ignored their best friend in the past while being preoccupied by a romantic partner. There were significant differences in emotional reactions of individuals depending on their gender, level of characteristic jealousy, and the perspective taken in the jealousy triangle. Analyses of suggested behavioral responses revealed a significant difference in verbosity depending on emotional reactions, gender, and level of characteristic jealousy. In general, the strategies adolescents' recommended for handling this situation were constructive, active responses that convey a continuing commitment to the relationship. © 2001 The Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents

Introduction

Participation in dating and others forms of romantic involvement with peers of the opposite sex is a significant and welcomed developmental milestone for most heterosexual adolescents, one typically and appropriately viewed as the culmination of a developing capacity for intimacy (Collins *et al.*, 1997; Collins and Sroufe, 1999). However, the emergence of this new form of relating in adolescence is neither sudden nor smooth. Instead, participation in dating and romantic relationships occurs gradually in the context of networks of same-sex friendships (Brown, 1999; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). To be sure, existing friendship networks support and scaffold early romantic relationships, thereby contributing to their success and developmental significance (Connolly and Johnson, 1996; Brown, 1999; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). Yet, the addition of dating partners to an existing network of friends is also a process fraught with social challenges, and within specific friendships, the onset of dating can create a complex social triangle of potential tension (Aneshensel and Gore, 1991; Clark-Lempers *et al.*, 1991; Larson and Richards, 1991). For example, as individuals begin spending more time engaged in activities with their dating partners, their time available for activities with existing friends may diminish noticeably. As a result, existing friends, especially those who have not yet begun dating themselves, may regard themselves as neglected and feel lonely. Even where established levels of contact are maintained, existing friends may resent the perceived encroachment into previously sovereign aspects of their partner's life (e.g. serving in the role of confidant). For their part, dating individuals, notwithstanding their excitement over their romantic involvements, may perceive themselves as less similar to their friends than previously or experience guilt over their neglect of existing friends. In the extreme, dating individuals may come to see their friends' frustration and impatience with them as unfair, misdirected, and motivated by petty envy.

If not handled effectively, such tensions can undermine adolescents' friendships and personal adjustment. At present, however, we possess limited understanding of the impact of the transition to dating on existing friendships. Instead, the existing research on dating has centered primarily on questions concerning the onset and course of dating (e.g. Feinstein and Ardon, 1973; McCabe, 1984), dating selection (e.g. Hansen, 1977; Buss and Barnes, 1986), individual variability in dating behavior (e.g. Neeman *et al.*, 1995), and the features of dating relationships and whether they show continuity with prior, same-sex friendships (e.g. Furman and Wehner, 1994, 1997).

The present study was designed to increase understanding of the impact of dating on adolescent's existing friendships by exploring early adolescents' perceptions of situations in which individuals neglect their friends as a result of their transition to steady dating partners. Specifically, the primary goal of this study was to examine the emotions experienced by adolescents who were asked to empathize with a hypothetical adolescent who is neglected by his or her best friend as a result of that friends' preoccupation with their steady dating partner. Although the time adolescents devote to dating partners presumably diminishes their availability to existing friends, the emotional impact of this loss of relationship rewards on friends has not been documented to date. To the extent that dating generates powerful, negative feelings of jealousy, anger, and resentment among existing friends, both existing friendships and the fragile new dating relationship may be disrupted.

As a point of comparison, we also explored whether adolescents' emotional experience shifted as they shifted their perspective from the role of the victim (i.e., the neglected individual) to that of the absorbed partner (i.e. the friend). Lazarus' Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory of Emotion (1991) has helped shape some of our expectations concerning the differential emotions that teens may make in the face of disappointment that does and does not result from the interference of an interloper. In particular, Lazarus' framework leads to the expectation that the profile of emotions experienced by adolescents would vary as their role within the jealousy triangle changed, such that: (1) in the role of victim, adolescents would feel more jealous, upset, and angry; and (2) in the role of absorbed partner, adolescents would feel more guilty. To the extent that adolescent's emotions shift with this important shift in perspective, an appreciation of the complexity of adolescents' reasoning about such situations is gained and our understanding of the specificity of adolescents' emotional reactions to such situations is increased.

A related aim was to explore how adolescents' emotional reactions to neglect by a dating friend vary as a function of their actual experience with being neglected in the past or neglecting a friend in the past. Because prior actual experience can prime associated emotions (Bargh, 1997), we expected that adolescents with more previous experience with feeling neglected by their friends would report stronger negative emotions to this experience than adolescents who have no related experience and thus are viewing the situation more abstractly. However, past experience was expected to play a quite different role in perceptions of emotional reactions to leaving a friend out, owing to the differing motives and concerns that face perpetrators versus victims of negative friendship events. Specifically, we assumed that adolescents with prior actual experience neglecting a friend have. (1) self-serving incentives to minimize their responsibility for causing distress to a friend; and (2) are more likely to see the exclusion of their friend in the mitigating light of the competing need to nurture a novel and rewarding romantic relationship. Accordingly, we expected that, overall, individuals who had previously neglected their friends for a dating partner would report less

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات