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You can't always get what you want: Network determinants of relationship inactualization in adolescence

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**YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT: NETWORK DETERMINANTS OF RELATIONSHIP INACTUALIZATION IN ADOLESCENCE**

**ABSTRACT:** Despite widespread interest in the link between social and sexual networks, little research has focused on how social networks influence the progression of intimate relationships (e.g., from holding hands to sexual intercourse). I argue that social networks not only affect individuals' opportunities to meet romantic partners, but also shape the ideal and actual progressions of intimate acts within their relationships. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), I conduct an optimal matching analysis of adolescents' purported ideal versus actual relationship sequences, which are comprised of romantic and sexual events. Low discrepancy scores indicate that intimate acts in one's recent relationship were sequenced much as one had desired. Results demonstrate that how students are situated within their schools' broader friendship networks affects their experiences with intimacy: high rank prestige individuals are better able to achieve their ideal relationships, as are individuals with densely knit friendship networks. Additionally, increased gender salience among boys within the socio-centric friendship network is associated with increased discord between desired and actual relationship progressions, but this relationship is mediated by the rareness of the individual's ideal relationship trajectory.

**KEYWORDS:** romantic relationship, social networks, sequence analysis, adolescence, sexual behavior

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